



**MONASH** University

**Faculty of Education**

**Empowerment and Desubalternising Voices through  
Education – A Case Study of Diasporic Indigenous  
Chakma in Melbourne**

**Urmee Chakma**

BA (Hons) (English), MA (English Literature),  
PostGrad Dip. (TESOL), Grad Cert (Educational Research)

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**May 2021**

**Submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Education, Monash University**

## Table of Contents

Copyright notice .....	vi
Declaration.....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
Dedication .....	ix
Glossary: Chakma words and phrases .....	x
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	xi
Abstract .....	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Overview of Chapter .....	1
1.2 Situating the Study.....	1
1.3 Background of the Study: The Chakma .....	3
1.3.1 History of the Chittagong Hill Tracts .....	3
1.3.2 Emergence of the <i>Shanti Bahini</i> .....	5
1.3.3 Emergence of <i>Jumma</i> Identity.....	5
1.3.4 Chakmas Homogenised .....	7
1.3.5 The Militarisation of the CHT.....	8
1.3.6 A Brief History of Chakma and Education .....	11
1.4 Rationale and Personal Motivation .....	13
1.5 Aim and Research Question .....	14
1.6 Scope and Significance of the Research.....	14
1.7 Operationalising Key Terms.....	15
1.8 Summary of Chapters .....	16
Chapter 2: Review of Literature .....	18
2.1 Introduction.....	18
2.2 Chakma and Indigeneity.....	21
2.2.1 The Politics of Indigeneity, Othering, and Belongingness .....	22
2.2.2 Indigeneity, Coloniality, and the Subaltern Chakma .....	26
2.2.3 Colonisation of the Chakma Identity.....	29
2.3 Indigenous People and Education .....	33
2.4 Chakma and Education .....	36
2.4.1 Chakma and Higher Education.....	37
2.4.2 Chakma and Educational Achievements .....	39
2.5 Chakma and Immigration.....	40

2.5.1 Migration to Urban Cities <i>for</i> Education .....	41
2.5.2 Migration to Australia <i>through</i> Education.....	46
2.5.2.1 Constructing a Diasporic Chakma Community.....	48
2.5.2.2 Remaining Chakma in Diaspora .....	51
2.5.2.3 Maintaining Chakma Culture and Language in Diaspora.....	52
2.5.2.4 Maintaining Buddhism in Diaspora .....	56
2.6 Theories of Relevance to this Study.....	58
2.7 Conclusion .....	65
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	67
3.1 Introduction.....	67
3.2 Research Design.....	67
3.2.1. Qualitative Research .....	68
3.2.2 A Case Study Approach .....	69
3.2.3 The Case .....	71
3.3 My Position as a Researcher .....	72
3.4 Participants' Selection Criteria .....	75
3.4.1 Participants Recruitment.....	75
3.4.2 Building Rapport with the Participants .....	76
3.5 Methods of Data Collection .....	77
3.5.1 The Semi-structured Interviews.....	79
3.5.2 The Focus Group Discussion .....	81
3.6 Data Analysis .....	82
3.6.1 Coding the Data .....	84
3.6.2 Bringing the Analysis Together .....	85
3.7 Rigour and Ethical Considerations .....	86
3.8 Trustworthiness .....	87
3.9 Research Challenges .....	88
3.10 Conclusion .....	89
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data and Findings .....	90
4.1 Introduction.....	90
4.2 Participants' Individual Profiles .....	90
Gita .....	91
Nanadhon.....	92
Babu .....	93
Devi .....	93
Mrinal.....	94

Juni.....	95
Binu.....	96
4.3 Level One: Foundational Analysis.....	97
4.3.1 The Importance of Education while Growing up.....	97
4.3.2 Reasons for Immigration to Australia and Settlement Processes.....	101
4.3.3 Staying Chakma in Melbourne – the Role of Community.....	105
4.3.4 Reasons for and Ways of Keeping in Touch with the CHT.....	107
4.3.5 Keeping in Touch with Other Diasporic Chakmas.....	109
4.3.6 Thoughts about the Future of the CHT and its People.....	111
4.3.7 Summary of Level One Findings.....	113
4.4 Level Two: Thematic Analysis.....	114
4.4.1 Finding 1: The Role of Education in Upward Mobility and Security.....	114
4.4.1.1 Calling Australia Home.....	115
4.4.1.2 Adjustment in Careers.....	116
4.4.1.3 Experiencing Racism in Australia.....	118
4.4.1.4 Women Becoming Empowered in Diaspora.....	119
4.4.2 Finding 2: The Role of Education in Preserving Culture in Diaspora.....	121
4.4.2.1 Importance of the Chakma Language.....	121
4.4.2.2 Importance of Social Networks - Meetings and Gatherings.....	123
4.4.2.3 Fear of Losing Culture/Tradition.....	124
4.4.2.4 Hyphenated Identities.....	126
4.4.2.5 Religion as an Invisible Marker of Identity.....	129
4.4.3 Finding 3: The Role of Education in the Role of Advocacy in Diaspora.....	130
4.4.3.1 The Politics of Nomenclature.....	131
4.4.3.2 Peace in the CHT: Pessimism about the Prospect.....	133
4.4.3.3 Demand for Indigenous/Adivasi Recognition.....	135
4.4.3.4 Minorities within a Minority.....	137
4.4.4 Summary of Level Two Analysis.....	140
4.5 Level Three: Capstone Analysis.....	141
4.6 Conclusion.....	142
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings.....	144
5.1 Introduction.....	144
5.2 Summary of Main Themes.....	144
5.2.1 Theme 1: Upward Mobility and Security.....	145
5.2.2 Theme 2: Preserving Culture in Diaspora.....	146
5.2.3 Theme 3: The Role of Advocacy.....	147

5.2.4 Summary.....	148
5.3 Discussion.....	149
5.3.1 Confirming Findings from Previous Studies.....	149
5.3.1.1 Increased Awareness in Preserving Language and Culture .....	149
5.3.1.2 Fear of Loss of Chakma Culture and Tradition .....	151
5.3.1.3 Family and Religious Cohesion.....	152
5.3.1.4 Career Advancement.....	153
5.3.1.5 Belonging /Not Belonging.....	154
5.3.1.6 Chakma and Indigeneity .....	155
5.3.2 Contradicting Findings from Previous Studies.....	157
5.3.2.1 The Role of Buddhism.....	157
5.3.2.2 Career Development .....	158
5.3.2.3 Experiencing Racism.....	158
5.3.3 Unique Findings .....	160
5.3.3.1 Readjustments in Identity.....	160
5.3.3.2 Women’s Shifting Roles.....	161
5.3.3.3 Minorities within a Minority .....	162
5.3.3.4 Summary of Findings .....	164
5.4 Theorising the Role of Education in Chakma Migration Stories .....	164
5.4.1 Coloniality of Power .....	165
5.4.2 Voicelessness and the Subaltern .....	172
5.4.3 Empowerment through Agency.....	175
5.5 Conclusion .....	184
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	185
6.1 Introduction.....	185
6.2 Revisiting the Main Findings.....	186
6.3 Implications and Contributions of the Study.....	187
6.4 Limitations of the Study .....	187
6.5 Suggestions for Further Research.....	188
6.6 Closing Reflections .....	189
References .....	191
Appendices.....	207
Appendix I Explanatory Statement.....	207
Appendix II Consent Form .....	209
Appendix III Interview Prompts .....	210
Appendix IV Question Prompts for Focus Group Discussion .....	212

Appendix V Pre-interview Question Form .....	213
Appendix VI Social Media Notice for Participant Recruitment .....	214
Appendix VII Gita’s Prayer Corner.....	215
Appendix VIII Tufan’s Artbin .....	216
Appendix IX Protests Against Land Grabbing.....	217

# Copyright notice

© Urmee Chakma (2021).

# Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or any other educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

(Signed) **Urmee Chakma**

The plan for this research was approved by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (Reference: 17673)



# Acknowledgements

First of all, I thank my parents Kanika Chakma and Dr. Sudhin Kumar Chakma, my two sisters Sinora and Troyee, and my two brothers-in-law Rajesh and Tridibesh for all the support they have given me during the candidature and writing of this thesis. My father took an active interest in asking about my writing progress and reminding me that I could always finish it on time.

I am indebted to a host of people who created the conditions that helped me complete this study.

My supervisors, Professor Zane Diamond and Dr. Marc Pruyn, provided warm and expert guidance and support over three and a half years, which resulted in this thesis. Their encouragement was central to keeping me going in times of uncertainty and doubt. I am grateful for their detailed commentaries on my early drafts. While the conclusions and errors in this thesis are entirely mine, I sincerely acknowledge the freedom they all extended to me to find my own way.

I thank my participants who agreed to be interviewed for this study and were generous enough to make time from their busy schedules to share their valuable experiences and insights with me.

I thank my wonderful fellow PhD researchers, study buddies, and colleagues, who became dear friends during this journey, especially during the long months of COVID-19 lockdown in Melbourne – Bingqing Li, Weiqi Jiang, Kulsum Chisti, SunYee Yip, Susmita Patnaik, Graise Kabuhung, Jennifer Cutri, Amarpreet Abraham, Hi Hou, Fatema Taj Johora, Judith Gomes, Lynette Pretorius, Mehdi Moharami, and Khairul Islam.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Jannatul Mawa, Ayesha Siddika, Neelima Akhter, Chara Chakma, Dinalo Chakma, Farzana Zabeen, and Janine Rainbow - all of whose support and encouragement was invaluable during the writing phase of the thesis.

I thank my life-long mentor in Bangladesh, Professor Fakrul Alam, for his continuing encouragement; he has inspired me to aim high.

I could not have completed the thesis without the love, support, and continuous encouragement of my family – my twin daughters Sami and Nish (my Buchha and Ditun), with whom I have had many meaningful, thoughtful, and encouraging conversations as they became adults during the time of this thesis. Finally, I thank my dearest husband (Shawn), Dr. Raqib Chowdhury, without whose support and encouragement I would not have been able to complete this thesis. Thank you for all the long walks listening to my fears, discussing my worries, for the constant suggestions, feedback, and tolerating my never-ending questions about whether I would be able to complete this PhD journey. Every time you said - yes, you can!

I acknowledge the professional services of Rosemary Viète as proof-reader of this thesis.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

# Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

All the Indigenous Peoples, who are fighting for their land rights, cultures, traditions, and their Indigenous recognitions.

My Nanu (grandmother) Birangana Chakma (Niru Ma) who passed away a year after I had started my PhD study. She was an extremely brave woman with exemplary morals. She could hardly write her name, yet both of her sons have PhDs.

Nanu, I always knew you were there watching over me so that I could accomplish the third PhD in the family.

# Glossary: Chakma words and phrases

*Ador* – Endearing affection

*Alphaloni* – A day to rest and take a break from farming and give rest to all animals, and tools of farmers

*Beiman* – Traitor

*Bhante* – Monk

*Bodnam* – Negative reputation (typically) for women

*Bizu* – The most significant cultural festival that continues for three days, April 12 – 14.

*Dhup* – White

*Ehra* – Meat

*Gajja Pojja Din* – The first day of the Bengali New Year

*Gom* – Good/Better

*Guduye* – Vegetables or meat cooked inside bamboo

*Hebang* – Meat or seafood cooked in banana leaves

*Hozoborolo* – Chaotic

*Hurbo* – Vegetables and sour fruits mixed with very spicy chilli paste

*Ihizhok* – Feeling vindicated from someone's misfortune

*Jumma* – The collective denoting all tribal minorities in Bangladesh

*Keyang* – Buddhist temple

*Lokkhi* – Timid

*Morichbattye* – Chilli paste made in a mortar and pestle with shrimp paste and/or roasted dry shrimp/dry fish, used as appetiser to eat with boiled/steamed vegetables

*Murubbi/s* – The elderly in the community, considered highly knowledgeable

*Pidey* – A type of rice cake

*Pinon-hadi* – Traditional two-piece handwoven clothes for Chakma women

*Shonkor* – Mixed

*Taba tone* – Vegetables cooked with dried fish, without oil.

*Tara* – A type of fragrant vegetable, exclusively grows in the CHT

*Udhor* – Borrowing money

# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AICCC – All India Chakma Cultural Conference

AL – Awami League

AusAID – Australian Aid for International Development

BANBEIS – Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

BBS – Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

BBS – Bangladesh Buddhist Society

CHT – The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh

IELTS – International English Language Testing System

ILO – International Labour Organisation

JUMNAPA – Jumma Peoples Network of the Asia Pacific Australia

LGBTQI – Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and Intersex

MNL – Manabendra Narayan Larma

NEP – National Education Policy of Bangladesh

NGO – Non-Government Organisations

PCJSS – Parbatty Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti, commonly known as *Shanti Bahini*

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

TAFE – Technical And Further Education

TAN – Transnational Activists Network

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNDRIP – United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WGIP – Working Group on Indigenous Populations

# Abstract

This study is a critical investigation into how the Chakma, a small Indigenous community from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh, have utilised educational affordances to migrate to a developed country like Australia and what role these educational affordances have played in their attempts at retaining, promoting and enriching their ethnic Chakma identity after immigration.

Recognising that Western and predominantly Anglophone or European theories and dominant epistemologies are often inadequate in understanding issues of assimilation and integration in diaspora for minorities, the research draws on theorists from the Global South, particularly on selected aspects of the work of Quijano, Spivak, and Kabeer, to problematise how one group of ethnic people experience being twice minoritised in diaspora, yet create spaces for growth rather than assimilation. The use of these theories was a deliberate choice that allowed a nuanced understanding of the complexities embedded within the lived experiences of the ethnic minorities' oppressed status, indigeneity, and subalternity, and how they use education in changing their subaltern positions to transcend discursive dominations of both space and time.

The participants were drawn from a wide range of age groups, years of residency, and professional backgrounds. Through dialogic sessions with them from two rounds of semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion, their educational achievements and desire to find a safer and more secure life for themselves and for their children are storied in complex and evolving narratives. This inductive and qualitative case study draws on some ethnographic features that helped build an understanding of the unique lived experiences of these Chakma.

Overall, the analysis reveals how the sense of powerlessness is transformed by the Chakma after living in a first-world country and shows the complex ways in which the strong relationship between Indigeneity and Chakma identity are metamorphosed and reconfigured in diaspora. Participants voiced how their past experiences of oppression and discrimination can continue to have a huge impact on their identity and sense of belonging and how this, in turn, can reshape their allegiances and identification of home. In this process, education becomes the central tool that serves the Chakma people to attain upward mobility while allowing them to preserve, maintain, and sustain their culture both spatially across other diasporic communities around the world, and intergenerationally through their children. These diasporic Chakma use resources that were not accessible to them in Bangladesh but also feel the need to raise global awareness about the political situations of minority communities

to help the people back home to desubalternise their positions. Their commitment includes taking a strong advocacy role in demanding Indigenous recognition and rights for the people in the CHT.

The findings point to the dynamic, shifting, and idiosyncratic positions of the Chakmas that are dictated not just by historical discourses of subjugation and the dominant discourses of powerful groups but also by their own intellectual, philosophical and moral metamorphosis over time. In this process, they find a strong voice to criticise the Bangladeshi nation state's colonial mindset in treating its ethnic minority communities. Their practices of cultural maintenance both individually and communally show greater awareness of maintaining and preserving culture, identity, religion, and overall Chakmaness.

This study is the first to investigate the role of education in Chakma diaspora. It concludes that it is important to seek alternative epistemologies to understand transnational migration, diaspora, and culture retention, especially for Indigenous minorities all around the world.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Overview of Chapter

This study critically problematises the diasporic Chakma community in Melbourne in terms of how they use, have used, and continue to use educational affordances and achievements to immigrate to a first-world country, like Australia, for a safer and better life and at the same time create conversations for advocacy to highlight the inability of the Bangladesh government to recognise its people. Despite a relatively solid body of research on the Chakma people, none has focused on how educated Chakmas in diaspora retain their culture and identity in a third country, a phenomenon that nonetheless is gaining importance because of increased global, transnational migration.

This chapter presents a brief introduction and overview of this study. First, it presents the background of the study, a brief history of the Chakmas from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), and the importance of education for them. This is then followed by my own story as part of the rationale for this study and the description of the research context - the diasporic Chakmas in Melbourne, Australia. The research question is then outlined, and the significance of this study is discussed; the key terms used for this study are presented in the last section.

## 1.2 Situating the Study

'Why shall I not resist!'

*Can they do whatever they please . . .*

*Turn settlements into barren land*

*Dense forests into deserts*

*Mornings into evenings*

*Turn fertile into barren.*

*Why shall I not resist!*

*Can they do whatever they please . . .*

*Estrange us from the land of our birth*

*Enslave our women.*

*Blind our vision*

*Put an end to creation.*

*Neglect and humiliation cause anger  
The blood surges through my veins  
Breaking barriers at every stroke,  
The fury of youth pierces the sea of consciousness.  
I become my whole self . . . why shall I not resist (Jolli No Uddim Kitei)*

(*Joli No Uddim Kitei* is a Chakma poem written in Bengali script as 'Rukhe Darabo Na Keno?' by the author Kabita Chakma in 1992, translated into English by Meghna Guhathakurta).

The above poem was written by Kabita Chakma, a young poet, in Chakma language, using the Bengali alphabet, in 1992 – the year I started my university studies full of dreams and hopes for the future for my people, the Chakma. When the poem was published, I read it many times, trying to understand the meaning of every word and every line. It evoked anger and frustration in me as I could completely relate to every single word and the collective connotations in the socio-political landscape of a postcolonial Bangladesh in which the Chakmas have been a minority and continued to be colonised by the Bengalis. The poem, its ironic translation in Bengali, and its unashamed, daunting, and defiant tone, were a reaction to what had been happening to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and its people as a result of ongoing political subjugation, unrest, and oppression in many forms for decades. It was very well received by the local Chakma as if the poet was speaking on behalf of them. I also remember some of my Bengali friends who were studying at Dhaka University making fun of the words as they tried to pronounce them but could not. They neither understood the meaning nor the sentiment behind it. I remember feeling both angry and sad by their reaction; I was not very aware of racism or discrimination at that time – a rather naïve nineteen-year-old *Pahari* hilly girl trying hard to fit in the Bengali-dominant metropolitan Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh, a girl who was extremely grateful to have passed the very competitive university entry exam and got admitted into the Department of English, University of Dhaka. She was terrified that she would have to study entirely in English, speak in English in class – in her third language – among the elite Bengali students.

I did not have the courage to confront my very well-groomed and well-dressed, fashionable Bengali friends who were making fun of the Chakma language. I just looked away and changed the topic to something familiar. Later, the poem was translated into English by Meghna Guhathakurta, a Dhaka University professor. The last line of the poem, where Kabita Chakma calls for becoming a whole self and resisting the oppressor, clearly shows the fiery notion of urgency in protecting the land, culture, and identity of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and its peoples. In order to understand both the poem and the context - which sets the tone of this study - it is important to know about the CHT, its peoples,



and the politics of Bangladesh. In this thesis, I use the terms Indigenous, Adivasi, Hill People, *Pahari* and *Jumma* alternatively and simultaneously as these are the often-contestable terms that we, the CHT people, use to refer to ourselves collectively.

### 1.3 Background of the Study: The Chakma

There has been significant empirical research about the Chakma people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh by many scholars who have focused mainly on violence and political unrest in the region (see, for example, Adnan, 2008; Chakma, 2015; M. J. A. Chowdhury, 2011; Mohsin; 2003; A. Uddin, 2015; van Schendel, 1992). This appears to be because the CHT has always attracted the attention of researchers and the media for its variegated political and anthropological history and an exoticised and orientalist (Said, 1979) interest in the local community. The focus of this study, instead, is on the Chakma's achievements through educational affordances. Therefore, it is essential to give a background of the region and its political history first.

#### 1.3.1 History of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Historically, the CHT has had a distinctive political and social system, although it has been subjected to many sovereignties, including the Mughal Empire, the British Empire, and Pakistan, before finally becoming a part of independent Bangladesh in 1971. Although the process of colonisation started during the period of the British East India Company in 1770, because of its distinctive location and demography, the British rulers granted the area special protection in the late nineteenth century to protect its cultural integrity from outside interference (Gerharz, 2014), giving its inhabitants a certain degree of autonomy until 1860 (R. D. Roy, 2004), and restricting people entering from outside the region. In 1900 the CHT Manual Act, popularly known as the '1900 Hill Tracts Manual', was adopted for the protection of ethnic minorities' land, culture, and traditional livelihoods (Chakma, 2015), which provided a special identity for CHT people and declared it as an excluded area (R. D. Roy, 2004). However, in 1964, the then Pakistani government withdrew the special status of the CHT people by amending the CHT Act, which allowed the entry of external people into the region (R. D. Roy, 2004). Although the 1900 Act is still active for legal administration, due to amendments made by the successive governments, the traditional local leadership gradually lost control over their land (A. Chakma, 2015).

After the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, Bangladesh became a part of Pakistan, and the CHT increasingly became a postcolonial state structure, mainly by means of development (Gerharz & Land, 2018). As part of development projects, the Pakistani government built the hydroelectric Kaptai Dam in the 1960s when nearly 100,000 people – 27% of the district population – almost overnight lost their arable land. Among them, most were Chakmas, and over 50% of the population in Rangamati

lost their houses underwater (A. Chakma, 2015). The Dam flooded the original Rangamati town, other structures, and submerged the Chakma King Palace. The government did not have an adequate plan to rehabilitate the displaced people, resulting in many taking refuge in India (Singh, 2008), marking the first major political diaspora of the Chakmas. In addition to this, in 1964, the Pakistani government withdrew the special status of the CHT people by amending the Act, which allowed mass entry of external people (Bengalis) into the CHT (R. D. Roy, 2004).

Since then, the CHT has witnessed several conflicts, genocides, and violence (Mohsin, 2010). After Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the people hoped that Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League (AL) leader and the first prime minister of Bangladesh who led the independence war against Pakistan, would recognise the diversity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts since the war against Pakistan was for a similar cause – language and cultural differences between Bengalis (who spoke Bengali) and Pakistanis (who spoke Urdu). A delegation of the CHT people, led by Manabendra Narayan (MN) Larma, met the Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman when the Bangladeshi Constitution was being drafted, demanding autonomy of the CHT with its own legislature, imposing a ban on the influx of non-Hill People and retention of regulation 1900 in the constitution of Bangladesh (A. Chakma, 2015).

Mujibur Rahman rejected the demands, instead advising the CHT people to forget they were ethnic minorities (Ahsan & Chakma, 1989), to become Bengali like the Bengali Muslims, and upgrade their status from *Upo-jati* sub-nation to *jati* nation. The first constitution of Bangladesh in 1972 followed Rahman's ideology of nationalism, stating that by nationalism, all citizens of Bangladesh are Bengali (van Schendel, 2009). There was a famous poster in 1971 that read, 'Hindus of Bengal, Christians of Bengal, Buddhists of Bengal, Muslims of Bengal – We Are All Bengalis' (van Schendel, 2009, p.43), which represents the cultural homogenisation in the politics of Bangladesh since its birth, excluding the non-Bengalis in power play. Indeed, at a public meeting in Rangamati, Mujibur Rahman, in 1975, addressed the tribals as brethren and instructed them to become Bengalis, to forget the colonial past, and join the mainstream Bengali culture (van Schendel, 2009).

Ghoshal (2018, p. 9) explains that 'The Awami League government was not sympathetic towards the ethnic communities, and subsequently the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh did not include any provision of recognising the distinct identity of the ethnic population living in the CHT'. Bangladesh thus became a constitutionally monolingual and mono-cultural, mono-national state, leaving the people virtually without any legal, constitutional recognition or protection in terms of identity, culture, and rights (Adnan, 2008). Not only were the people not granted special provisions, but they were instead made part of the assimilation model of inclusion high on the national agenda (B. Chakma, 2010) favouring the Bengali language, culture, and Islam.

### 1.3.2 Emergence of the *Shanti Bahini*

The CHT people fiercely opposed this decision of exclusion of the non-Bengali people, eventually leading to an armed conflict between Parbattyo Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), *Shanti Bahini*, an armed political group, and the Bangladeshi military from 1972 to 1997, established by Manabendra Narayan Larma (MNL). A direct result of the armed conflicts provided justification for an excessive presence of the military and paramilitary forces in the CHT. At some point, according to Shahriyar (cited in R. Joshi, 2003), an estimated 37,000 troops and auxiliary forces were deployed to fight approximately 7,000 insurgents. The CHT was designated as a military zone in 1976 (R. Joshi, 2003). In the existing literature, most authors use PCJSS when referring to the *Shanti Bahini*; however, I will use only the term *Shanti Bahini* throughout the thesis as this is how the local people and the participants in this study have always addressed them. The *Shanti Bahini* stated:

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is the homeland of linguistically different Jatis (nationalities or communities). For centuries, these linguistically different Jatis have inhabited the CHT and maintain their own communities, culture, and language. Every nation in the world, either big or small, tries its best to uphold its national identity and solidarity. The linguistically different *Jumma* people of the CHT are no exception to this (Translated by K. Chowdhury, 2008).

Over the years, there had been several unsuccessful initiatives to bring peace to the region by both parties, the *Shanti Bahini*, and the various regimes, although it is widely believed the military never wanted to have peace in the CHT (B. Chakma, 2010). In 1992, the *Shanti Bahini* declared a three-month cease-fire that continued until the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997. In my optimistic naivety as a young woman, I was present at the Peace Accord signing in Khagrachhari; people celebrated the occasion enthusiastically in the hope that, finally, peace would prevail.

However, not everyone in the CHT welcomed the Peace Accord; in fact, some of the smaller political groups, namely the *Hill Students Council* and the *Hill Women Federation*, challenged the *Shanti Bahini*'s right to be the sole representative of all the 13 minorities. The *Shanti Bahini* had been the only political party of the Hill People of the CHT until 1997 when the Peace Accord was signed, but it ultimately splintered into the Pro- and Anti-Peace Accord groups. An anti-political party was formed in 1998. Anecdotal evidence and my conversations with the local people in Khagrachhari and Rangamati show that currently, there are at least four to five different political groups operating in the CHT.

### 1.3.3 Emergence of *Jumma* Identity

Due to the frustration created by such exclusion, polarisation, and subjugation of the ethnic minorities, a new collective *Jumma* identity emerged among the 13 ethnic groups. The word *Jumma* originated from *Jum*, a traditional mode of cultivation that has been used by the Hill People for many centuries.

The term, however, was/is used pejoratively by Bengalis to denote the Hill People as primitive and backward farmers (Mohsin, 2000). *Jumchash* or *Jum* cultivation is not only a mode of cultivation but also a way of life, being close to nature, 'integral to their social, religious and cultural ethos' (Mohsin, 2000, p. 80). Although both the British and later Pakistan had made repeated attempts to put a stop to *Jum* cultivation, as they too had considered it backward, primitive, and non-profitable, the Hill People continued the centuries-old traditional cultivation process.

Importantly, *Jum* also denotes the special relationship of the Hill People to their land, which is distinctively different from that of Bengalis. The *Shanti Bahini* believed *Jumchash* represents separateness from the plain land of Bengalis as 90% of the land in the CHT constitutes hilly land. It is still the dominant mode of cultivation among the Hill People. This mode of slash-and-burn cultivation is also completely different from how the Bengalis from the plains cultivate, which is plough cultivation, absent in *Jum* cultivation. This not only sets the Hill People apart from the Plain people but also, as Mohsin (2000) points out, shows different attitudes and outlooks towards life in general.

Through this inclusive *Jumma* identity, I argue that the *Shanti Bahini* have been able to promote the establishment of a strong sense of shared and common identity among the minorities in the CHT, although many writers contest with the term *Jumma* nationalism as the Chakmas dominated the leadership roles within the *Shanti Bahini* and at times many have regarded it as a Chakma only movement (K. Chowdhury, 2008). I strongly concur with K. Chowdhury's (2008) argument that 'the most important and innovative aspect of *Jumma* nationalism is the self-assertion and articulation of *Jumma* identity for the Hill People' (p. 67). Indeed, to oppose Bangladesh's hegemonic ideology and ongoing subjugation, the Hill People had to come up with an invented communal identity that did not exist before.

It is not only the cultivation process that makes the Hill People separate from the Bengali and their cultural, linguistic, and religious practices. The Hill People all speak distinct Tibetan-Burmese dialects with the exception of the Chakma and the Tanchangya, who, according to van Schendel (1995), speak an Indo-Aryan language now considered a local Bengali dialect. In religious terms, none of the communities follow Islam, which is what most (91%) Bengalis follow. There are also differences that exist among the Hill People in terms of language, religious practices, and social organisation (K. Chowdhury, 2008). Although they belong to the Mongoloid race, they have neither a common language nor a common religion. They also follow different marriage customs with varying kin systems.

Indeed, a *Jumma* nationalism-based identity actively started as a way of distancing itself from the Bengali assimilation project (Adnan, 2008). The term was popularised by the *Shanti Bahini*, the only regional political party. van Schendel (2001) believes the term was invented to refer to the original

inhabitants of the CHT and as a way of protecting themselves as non-Bengalis to highlight the Hill People's cultural distinctiveness from the Bengalis, emphasising their shared possession of a *Jumma* homeland – the Chittagong Hill Tracts – a shared history of oppression and marginalisation and the need to develop a cultural model. It is notable that the start of the Hill People's *Jumma* nationalism or identity politics had started in the 1960s. S. Chakma (1985) claims an underground student association known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts Welfare Association (CHTWA) was formed in 1966 to identify *Jumma* nationalism as a political movement. This movement was not successful and did not get much attention as it was overshadowed by the bigger conflict of East and West Pakistan (K. Chowdhury, 2008).

The *Shanti Bahini* took the opportunity to promote this *Jumma* identity to infuse the Hill People with a sense of pride in their traditional system, culture, and values, which also promoted the past life of the Hill People; it was represented as a simple and harmonious way of living among themselves that the outsiders had repeatedly destroyed. This identity, as Mohsin (2000) argues, has given the people in the CHT a sense of continuity and unity and has also created images of outsiders and insiders among the Hill People (thereby nationalising people). It is this continuity that this study aims to explore among those who left Bangladesh.

#### 1.3.4 Chakmas Homogenised

However, it is important to note that the Chakmas in India do not feel the same about the collective *Jumma* identity and its inclusiveness. According to van Schendel (2001), there were three reasons for this. First, the majority of the Chakmas are descendants of the political and developmental refugees of the 1940s and 1960s; therefore, they have no links to Bangladesh (which was established in 1971), or to the *Jumma* identity that developed as a concept in the 1970s and 1980s in response to militarisation and oppression. Second, Chakmas had been categorised as a 'scheduled' tribe in a number of states in India before the Chakma refugees arrived after Bangladesh came into existence in 1971. India also encourages self-organisation on tribal grounds because of its well-established policy of positive discrimination in favour of scheduled tribes. Bangladesh, in contrast, has never had such a policy. Finally, those Chakmas who arrived after the partition had been treated as inferior refugees and therefore, had little chance of integrating into the local society. For example, the thousands of refugees that fled to India after the Kaptai Dam construction were relocated in far-off Arunachal Pradesh, and to date, had never received full citizenship.

I argue that in this political sense, the Chakmas in India see it to be more beneficial and appear more interested in Chakmaness as a unifier which is further evident in their involvement in political activities. For example, in 1993, Chakmas in India organised a conference called the World Chakma Conference.

Two years later, in 1995, the All-India Chakma Cultural Conference (AICCC) was held to demand an end to Chakma oppression in several states: Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam. They also demanded the recognition and inclusion of the Chakma language in primary schools in Tripura (van Schendel, 2001). D. K. Singh (2010) argues that Chakmas in India have been able to access state resources that were completely unavailable to the Chakmas in Bangladesh. By contrast, Chakmas outside India, including in Bangladesh, have continued using the regional *Jumma* identity. For example, Chakmas in Western countries set up a network called the *Jumma* People Network in the 1960s, and in 1996, The *Jumma* Peoples Network of the Asia Pacific Australia (JUMNAPA) was established as an organisation on the Internet.

### 1.3.5 The Militarisation of the CHT

To tackle the situation with the *Shanti Bahini*, the Bangladeshi Government adopted a militarised strategy by deploying a vast number of military and other armed forces to assimilate or erase the ethnic minorities by systemic persecution, eviction, physical annihilation and ethnic cleansing (B. Chakma, 2010). In addition to militarisation of the CHT region, the Bangladesh government took the decision to migrate Bengalis into the CHT from the plains, which B. Chakma (2010) argues had two objectives. This was, first, to enhance support for the army to contain insurgency and create strategic hamlets (p. 290) – similar to those in the ill-fated American strategy in Vietnam; and second, to pursue a policy of gradual extermination of the communities through a demographic change in the CHT. Adnan (2013) reports that, in consequence, many incidents of massacres, killing, rape, sexual violence, indiscriminate arrest, and abduction took place, which was mainly committed by the Bengali settlers, who had been moved to the CHT by the successive governments with the help of the military.

Mohsin (2003) notes that the government's other key aim was to Islamise the region by establishing mosques, terrorising people to convert to Islam, forced marriages, or impregnating women to slow down the natural growth of the people. Although after much negotiation, the Peace Accord was signed in December 1997, many researchers (Adnan, 2013; B. Chakma, 2010; A. Uddin, 2015) strongly argue that the political situation is far from being peaceful in the CHT to date. This is primarily due to the altered demographic character caused by the continued Bengali settlement program in the CHT and the strong presence of the military posts, which were supposed to be removed as per the CHT Peace Accord, 1997.

I wrote the vignette below after returning to Melbourne from my last visit to Khagrachhari in January 2020. It reflects the present condition of the CHT, the demographic change with the ongoing Bengali settlement program.

### A Sojourner's Diary – from one home to another . . .

As I take a seat in the waiting room at the Hyundai bus service to board the most expensive bus service to Khagrachhari, I feel both anxious and excited. I can't help feeling anxious about the upcoming 6/7 hour bus journey I'm about to take, thinking about all the horrific road accidents I read on social media or how rough the bus drivers are on the road, particularly now that there are highways with 3 to 4 wide lanes, bus drivers are quite reckless. I can't also help feel the excitement as this is the first time I'll be on a bus in Bangladesh since 2008. The last time I went home, it was in my sister's car.

The bus is half-full. I look around to see if there are *Jummas* around me and try to hear if someone is speaking in Chakma. My brother-in-law from Rangamati calls to see if everything is OK and if there are other Chakmas. I hear a man at the back speaking Chakma on the phone. I immediately feel relieved. All in all, among 15 passengers, three of us are *nak-boncha*, the rest are Bengalis. Without realising, I go back to the many bus journeys I had taken while studying at Dhaka University in the 90s. I would usually be on a *Dolphin* night coach, enduring half-asleep 7-10 hour long journeys, anticipating eating my mother's *suguni hurbo*, my favourite item for breakfast. I would salivate just thinking about it. Back then the bus also would be almost entirely full with *Jumma* students/people. Ah, the good old university days...

I start reading a half-read book that I've been trying to finish about human rights violations in many countries, something I can deeply relate to. But the bus is jiggly, swerving in between lanes and overtaking others. Fear of a possible accident creep into me. I can no longer read and try to relax, closing my eyes on the lazy-boy type of seat – it is indeed very comfortable with lots of leg space, worth the price I paid for the ticket. When the bus hit a minibus in front of us, I'm really not surprised. I mutter I knew it would happen! I feel slightly ashamed that I've said it English as the person sitting next to me gives a look. Oh, is he looking at me because I'm the only one wearing a seatbelt? I smile inside when everyone starts discussing the heavy *jhakuni* they felt as the driver had to brake hard. I'm not the odd one anymore, am I? I ask my sister not to tell Maa and Baba. I call Maa to say I'll arrive late, there has been an accident in front of us.

The journey becomes longer with fixing the broken left window, side mirror, and some other fixing required for the rest of the journey, as the driver puts it for the hilly *rasta*. I feel rather restless, my family is expecting me for lunch and I can't wait to eat my mother's cooking... ah, the best food in the whole wide world. I try to keep positive and hope for no more accidents. The bus driver and the supervisor (not to be called 'conductor' anymore I'm told) seem more careful and vigilant; who wants to have more *jharis* from the boss, after all?

As we enter the Hill Tracts, roads become narrower, but I feel a lot safer. I know them, I can almost smell the leaves, the hills. I sit straight with excitement. I don't want to miss anything within my vicinity, the familiar trees covered in winter dust, the uneven, zigzag, bumpy roads with potholes in them. Not much has changed. I'm glad it hasn't. I'm coming home, I'm nearly there. I can hardly hold my excitement. I call some friends, cousins to let them know I'll be at Khagrachhari for the next five days. The other two Chakmas get off by the time we reach Guimara. I'm the only

*nak-boncha on the bus and one of the just two women. Oh God, please let us reach Khagrachhari before dark.*

*Ah, finally, my all-time favourite place Alutilla; I can see the whole town from here. I visualise the rest of the half an hour journey now. I tell the supervisor the exact spot to drop me off. He smiles and says, Didi, we still have half an hour left. I smile back and say I know. Do you live in *bidesh* didi? Why? I ask; I noticed you wore your seatbelt as soon as we got on the bus. I smile without giving him an answer. I have been advised to keep low, *bideshis* are not very safe in the CHT.*

*I see Maa, boro Pishima and my sister waiting for me at the stop. I thank the driver and the supervisor for their help and get off. I see Baba walking towards us too. He takes my suitcase, and we start walking towards home. It's hardly a five-minute walk. So much has changed within this short path. There are some temporary tents. I'm told they always appear at night, stay there for three to four days, and disappear. No one knows where they go. I see three Bengali-owned shops, and the number of Bengalis faces I see, I get a shock. Why are there so many of them? I start fearing for the future of my people. I wasn't prepared for this.*

It was an unsettling experience for me to witness the demography change wherever I travelled to, even in areas where it was once unthinkable to see a Bengali face. Indeed, since the Accord, several thousands of people have fled the region as part of an illegal silent migration (Ghoshal, 2018) to take shelter in India and have remained stateless since, as they belong neither to Bangladesh nor India. For decades, what has been happening in the CHT can be attributed to political instability, and the steps and initiatives the inhabitants have taken is reactive; each transformation of these communities can be viewed as a reaction to the action of the nation-state, Bangladesh, with which they have a symbiotic relationship. Militarisation and repression by the Bangladesh army 'forced tens of thousands of Chakmas to seek political refuge abroad from the mid-1980s' (van Schendel, 2001, p. 118). Although the majority of the Chakma has been living in Tripura, the Chakma diaspora has now spread to other Indian states and well beyond from South Asia to Europe and North America and to Australia – which is the context of this study.

As conveyed in my vignette, during my last two visits to the CHT in 2019 and 2020, after several conversations with the locals, I gathered that most people remain highly sceptical about the possibility of meaningful and enduring peace in the region. R. Joshi (2003) believes like for many other important issues in Bangladesh, the Peace Accord has been caught in the cross confrontation of party politics. In Bangladesh, politics broadly feature a wide array of confrontation, competition, monopolisation of state institutions, and resources by the party in power. This trend of politics has tremendously weakened the formal accountability mechanisms and put governance in crisis (Afrina, 2010). The current Awami League government does not want history to be repeated. The current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Mujibur Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh who was



murdered by the military in 1975, shortly after he led the independence war against Pakistan. There is indeed a strong belief that the Bangladesh army in the CHT has become too powerful – so much so that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina does not have any control over the situation, and therefore, the future of the CHT remains solely in the hands of the military force, and thus peace continues to be a remote reality for the CHT and its peoples.

However, despite this context and although informed by it, the focus of this study is not on the above-mentioned political instability in the region but on the educational achievements of the Chakmas against which it is juxtaposed. Today, over 71% of Chakmas are literate (Rashiduzzaman, 1998; Visser & Gerharz, 2016). Against the backdrop of the above history, this study argues that despite all the oppression, violence, and discrimination, the Chakma people have stayed resilient, motivated, and focused on education, especially those in the diaspora, notwithstanding enduring challenges described above.

### 1.3.6 A Brief History of Chakma and Education

Research and extant artefacts show that the history of Chakma education was documented from more than three centuries ago. Literature shows the Chakma have been literate since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. van Schendel (1992) reports that an East India Company surveyor, Francis Buchanan Hamilton, in 1797, recorded seeing a Chakma Buddhist priest reading a Bengali text. Due to a lack of official records, we cannot trace back if Chakmas had been literate prior to 1797. Hutchinson's book *An Account of the Chittagong Hill Tracts* is the earliest record of Chakma education that I have found, published in 1906. It recorded that Chakmas showed a great initiative for education in CHT as early as in 1862 after the declaration of the CHT as a district by the British. An elementary boarding school was established where the pupils learnt English and Bengali (Hutchinson, 1906, p. 77). In 1873, it was raised to Middle English status; according to Hutchinson's (1906) record, 40 students passed primary and 19 Middle English examinations.

Hutchinson (1906) recorded that in 1890, the school was raised to a full-fledged English-medium high school. Twenty-two students passed the Entrance Examination in 1893, among whom were the Chakma Raja Bhuban Mohan Roy and his brother. Although no more high schools were established between 1890 and 1951, the number of primary schools Hutchinson recorded in 1906 was 74. The number of high schools started expanding in 1951, and by 2001, the number of primary schools had increased to 1,169, with 200 secondary and 19 colleges (B. Chakma, 2010). Higher degree educational institutes did not exist before 2014, although some colleges offered post higher secondary level courses. Rangamati Medical College was established in 2014, and the first university - Rangamati

Science Technology University, was established only in 2017. These new resources are likely to facilitate an increase in the uptake of education by Chakmas.

Certainly, like in many parts of the world, in Bangladesh, education plays a crucial role in improving individuals' socio-economic circumstances and is a key factor in reducing poverty and accessing the lines of social mobility. Education is very important for the development of future generations and especially for minorities as it is seen as one of the clearest and most direct routes towards self-determination out of social poverty.

Education is now seen as particularly important for the people from the CHT; the region has observed a significant increase in the number of students experiencing social and spatial mobility in recent decades. The reason behind this mobility lies in aspiring to higher education for a better future. It has been deeply realised that the disadvantaged position of the Chakma and the Indigenous People in the CHT cannot be changed unless they take education seriously. Most students after Higher Secondary Examination (HSC) need to go to study at universities in either Dhaka or Chittagong – the two most sought-after cities because there is very little opportunity to complete a Bachelor or a Master's degree in the CHT. Entering a university is very challenging for the students as they have to compete in their second (Bengali) and third (English) languages, and only a small number pass the entry test in a well-reputed university. The rest seek enrolment in less reputed ones and would still continue towards a Master's degree because, without a Master's degree, it is almost impossible to get a good job either in the public or private sector.

The Kaptai Dam incident marks a significant milestone concerning the Chakma's attitudes towards education. In particular, the Chakmas took education seriously as a survival strategy (M. S. Chowdhury, 2010); when many lost their homes and arable land. Education became the only remaining way to retain their Chakma identity and compensate or counterbalance their minority status in all forms of discrimination, starting from land grabbing to political oppression.

Education in this study has been used as a reference to institutional or formal education starting from primary to tertiary levels. I refer to education in its more general sense since I do not intend to discuss the constituent components of pedagogy, curriculum, or assessment; rather, I refer to the discourses associated with education, and the general perception, among participants, about how education plays a role in their life and living. Educational affordances are opportunities for action and receiving education or becoming educated in the general sense. Since the participants in this study and I have gone through similar trajectories in affording education, I use education with such institutional and formal meanings. The importance of education for the Chakma and their educational achievements will be discussed more in Chapter 2.

## 1.4 Rationale and Personal Motivation

My own experience as a Chakma-Australian-Bangladeshi, carrying multiple identities in my everyday life while maintaining a robust diasporic connection with the CHT, has led me to conducting this research. Why have Chakmas been so persistent about education? How have they achieved such a high literacy rate? These were questions that I have sought answers to since I was a child because I knew that Chakmas had to have a degree of mastery in their second and third languages in order to achieve such successes. My maternal grandfather went to study medicine in Calcutta, although he did not finish because he became extremely homesick. My paternal grandfather finished high school, while my uncles and aunts were all college or university graduates. My uncle, a retired university professor, was the very first Chakma to have achieved a PhD, and a few years later, my father also completed his PhD. Because of all these achievements from the previous generation, there were high expectations from us in the family. My two sisters and I completed a Master's from Dhaka University, and in 2000 I was awarded the AusAID (Australian Aid for International Development) scholarship to study at an Australian university, and my sister in 2006.

However, I became interested in pursuing a PhD in Chakma Studies much later when I saw Professor Amit Chakma as the convocation speaker at the 50<sup>th</sup> convocation ceremony at Dhaka University in 2017. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science (ScD), a profound achievement and an extremely proud moment for all Chakmas. Professor Chakma has served as the 10<sup>th</sup> president and Vice-Chancellor of Western University, Ontario, Canada, and is currently the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Perth. I personally have never met him, but I knew quite well about his personal and academic achievements simply because I am a Chakma. We come to know about other successful Chakmas no matter where they live. It is significant to note that Professor Chakma and his family were among those that lost their house and land when the Kaptai Dam was built. In an interview, he admitted the struggle of poverty and uncertainty of the future: "As I was growing up, it became very clear life was going to be very difficult for us, and the only way out of it was education and early on, my parents instilled in me the need to study" (Chakma, interview in 2017).

This "only way out of it" struck me, making me realise that despite all the oppression, negativity, and obstacles the Chakma people have had to endure, they have indeed come a long way. Today there are many Chakma academics, doctors, engineers, and other professionals in almost every corner of the world. Despite the ongoing political issues in the CHT, they have been using education as a tool to advance themselves in search of a better life. Life for the Chakma has never been easy, as they constantly struggle to protect their land, fighting for survival. I did not realise until I came to Australia that I had never been fully aware of how oppressed my people have been for generations.

Through this study, I intend to highlight a group of Chakmas' educational achievements by documenting their lived experiences and their journeys from the CHT to Australia to showcase how they have displayed resilience as a minority group. Being a Chakma and a migrant in Australia, I wanted to deepen my own understanding about the other Chakmas; how through education, they continue to strive to retain their Chakma culture and identity in diaspora, yet at the same time how education has helped them to emigrate, settle in a first-world country, and what they think about the future of the Chakma and the CHT.

When Chakmas arrive in Melbourne, they automatically acquire a third identity; on top of their ethnic identity as Chakma, national identity as Bangladeshi, they assume the new diasporic identity as Australian residents. However, within each of these, what does it mean to be a Chakma, and how is Chakmaness negotiated and understood in these three identity spaces? What do they do to protect and preserve this Chakmaness in a society where multiculturalism is promoted very strongly, yet which also remains largely assimilationist?

## 1.5 Aim and Research Question

To develop the research question, I first reviewed the literature and research related to my topic area. Based on the literature review, I discovered that there are only two empirical research articles written about diasporic Chakmas in two countries; one by Gerharz and Land (2018) on Chakmas in New York and the other one by Chakma and Hill (2018) on the Chakmas in France – I discuss these articles in detail in Chapters 2 and 5. There is also a newspaper article published in the Korean language written on the Chakma refugees' experiences in South Korea. However, none of these articles focused on the educational affordances and achievements of the Chakma. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by investigating how a group of Chakmas, through unique utilisations of educational affordances, have migrated to Melbourne, Australia, and more specifically, by exploring the various ways in which a group of Chakma in Australia have utilised educational affordances in creating conversations of advocacy to highlight the inability of Bangladesh state machineries to recognise its 13 Indigenous Peoples in the CHT. This study is thus projected to answer the following question:

*What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?*

## 1.6 Scope and Significance of the Research

While there has been significant research on histories and ethnographic accounts of the CHT (see, for example, Guhathakurta & Schendel, 2013; Mohsin, 2003), research on the educational achievements of the Chakmas remains scant. In fact, to my knowledge, no research has been conducted on how the Chakma, a community from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, have utilised educational

affordances to migrate to a developed country like Australia and what role these affordances have played in retaining their ethnic Chakma identity and culture *after* immigration. Therefore, this study hopes to add to the literature with learnings from research on the complex process of how Chakma people maintain their Chakmaness in Melbourne and how education is helping them – or not – to maintain Chakma identity.

By understanding this process, this study expects to offer critical and sensitive insights into the importance of education, particularly to other Indigenous People in Bangladesh. In a broader sense, the study could understand the vital role education plays in promising a sustainable way towards upward social mobility for the disadvantaged, politically, and socially oppressed minorities in other countries. This study also has the potential to help us find out about the complexities that minority people in general experience in search of a better life in foreign countries.

## 1.7 Operationalising Key Terms

This study is inductive in nature. I chose this approach to generate meanings from the data without applying theories or hypothesising at the beginning of the research. I wanted to understand the experiences of my participants' journey from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) to Australia without any presuppositions, assumptions, or hypotheses in mind. The selection of the theories emerged from my analysis of what the seven participants have revealed through two rounds of interviews and a focus group discussion are explained in Chapter 5.

Initially, to develop my research design and facilitate a more sensitive and nuanced understanding of the lives of the diasporic Chakma community in Melbourne, I systematically brought in, adopted, and engaged with scholars and theories from the Global South, who are non-Anglo, non-English from non-white backgrounds. This is because, first of all, scholarly literature, as far as its global dissemination is concerned, is dominated by Western discourses in the sense of being predominantly Eurocentric, Anglophone, white, and male. This poses a problem because it often fails to look at alternative views by neglecting or marginalising the Global South and non-English theories and studies. Because I am dealing with a group of minority people, leaving their country of origin and becoming assimilated or integrated into a diasporic community – and thus arguably *twice* minoratised – I realised that Anglo, male, white epistemologies were in many ways insufficient and inadequate in problematising and understanding the subtleties and the complexities embedded within Chakma experiences. Therefore, my engagement with Global South theorists, for example, Quijano (2000), Spivak (1988), and Kabeer (1999) was a deliberate choice that added a layer of epistemological sensitivity both to my participants' experiences and my understanding of the People, which I explain in Chapter 5 in more detail. Likewise, when I refer to Bangladesh as a 'postcolonial' state, I am aware that this term is

understood and experienced differently by different groups. For the Chakma, Bangladesh continues to be colonised, politically, culturally, socially, and religiously by the majority Bengali (Kabir & R. Chowdhury, 2021). In my theoretical discussions, I, therefore, refer to coloniality as the invisible networks of power inherent in the social structures of contemporary Bangladesh and how the Chakma are positioned within them. Below are some key terms that are operationalised in relation to how they have been understood and used in this study, despite each of these being much more complex both in abstract and tangible ways.

**Ethnic minorities** in this study is used to refer to the Indigenous/Adivasi people, specifically, the Chakma from the CHT region in Bangladesh.

**Subalterns** refer to the voiceless, oppressed, subjugated, powerless, and non-dominant Chakmas who cannot exert power over their land rights, human rights, and most importantly, who do not have control over what they want to be called, in other words, their identity.

**Colonialism** is seen as the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political/structural control over a community or group and exploiting it economically and culturally.

**Education** in this study is used as a general term, referring to formal and institutional education starting from primary to tertiary levels.

**Skilled immigration** is a point-based visa system in Australia that allows skilled and educated people to apply for a permanent Australian visa.

**Empowerment** in this study is seen as people having control, choice, and power over their lives; implicit in the term is the understanding that people can be empowered only if they have been disempowered before.

## 1.8 Summary of Chapters

This dissertation comprises six main chapters. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of the Chakma people and the CHT, particularly focusing on how, despite being in a disadvantaged position, they have achieved a high literacy rate. Its principal aim is to examine and understand the importance of education, which has played a significant role in today's Chakma identity and culture retention both in the CHT and in diaspora. It also touches on predominant trends in scholarly literature and gives a brief summary of the research question and then aim and scope of this study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature, research, and key concepts that are most relevant and important for this study. It also discusses and critiques the role of education for Indigenous People and for the Chakma, including how educational achievements can assist marginalised, ethnic minorities, and

disadvantaged people to overcome oppression and barriers as they strive for a better and secure life in another country and how they wish to maintain Chakma culture and identity in diaspora. The research draws on theorists from the Global South and, in doing so, demonstrates the usefulness of such theories for exploring issues associated with ethnic minorities, Indigeneity, and how they use education in retaining culture, tradition, and identity in diaspora.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodological choices adopted for the research, explaining the research design, data collection, analysis methods, and ethical considerations for this study. Participants were drawn from a wide range of age groups among the 100 Chakmas currently residing in Melbourne. The chapter includes the practical aspects of data collection and analysis both in terms of the choice of research tools and the challenges in applying them, along with the rationales for these choices.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the three levels of data analysis related to the two rounds of individual interviews and a focus group discussion. Overall, the analysis reveals how education has helped the Chakmas escape their marginalised position and that they have found relative safety and security in Melbourne, Australia. Education has also enabled them to realise the paramount importance of protecting and maintaining their Chakma culture and identity. Moreover, most importantly, education has given the diasporic Chakmas an empowered voice to advocate recognition and rights and to point out the failure of Bangladesh to recognise its Indigenous People.

Chapter 5 presents a critical discussion of the research findings in relation to the existing literature. The chapter is set out in two parts concerning: first, how some of the findings confirm the existing literature, while some contradict the existing literature, and finally, the new and unique findings that were generated through data analysis. The second part of the chapter explains how I incorporated three major theories in a unified theoretical framework to explain the data and answer my research question.

Finally, Chapter 6 offers a concluding overview of the study and makes suggestions for future studies. The study concludes that despite being oppressed, subjugated politically, socially, and economically for simply being Indigenous or ethnic minority, education can open possibilities to a safer and better future for the Chakma people. While there is a fear of losing certain cultural aspects, it is still possible to transfer them both intergenerationally and transnationally.

In the next chapter, I critically examine the literature relevant to my study.

# Chapter 2: Review of Literature

*After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving.*

T S Eliot, Gerontion (1920)

## 2.1 Introduction

Based on a review of previous studies, this chapter critically considers some of the central concepts used in this study and operationalises them in line with how these are used in the analysis and discussion chapters. It also situates the role of education for Indigenous people in general and for the Chakmas specifically. Chapter 1 set the backdrop against which this study is located, a historical account of the reasons for Chakmas leaving the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and then eventually leaving Bangladesh. Following on, this chapter focuses on a discussion of the formation of the Chakma diasporic identity and culture retention in the context of Melbourne, Australia.

Using existing literature, the first three parts problematise the complexities inherent in how the Chakma have been struggling to be officially recognised as Indigenous/Adivasi, how education is used as a life-altering affordance by migrating to Australia, how these are enacted in the Chakmas' diasporic experiences, and finally, how these have informed the maintenance of Chakma culture and Chakmaness in these new spaces. This also includes a consideration of the importance of Indigeneity for diasporic Chakmas.

Given the prominence of the historical account presented in this Chapter, an important disclaimer needs to be made. I understand history as a construct rather than descriptive narrative facts that are objective, uncontested, and unproblematic. The ruling class/nation writes the history from where knowledge about the dominated, oppressed minorities, subalterns, Indigenous Peoples is generated. Over time, these knowledges tend to be accepted unquestioned and assume the status of undisputed truths. Therefore, I question the knowledge and history we know about the Chakma – whose knowledge, whose history is it? What are they for, and who gets to use them? Because appropriation by people in power of such knowledge about the oppressed, colonised people is harmful, such knowledge and history almost always do not represent the truth of these subjugated peoples' history.



In the context of Australia, where this thesis is written, Foley (2003) argues that when Indigenous students are researching in Australian universities, they become 'frustrated by being forced to accept Western, ethnocentric research' (p. 1) with Western perspectives of post-structuralism, positivism, and classical Western theories. Smith (1999) believes this is an ongoing practice of colonialism in the Western academy. Seminal works such as Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* (1997), Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999), Ahmad's *Jamerson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory* (1987), Loomba's (1998) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Mignolo's (2001) *Coloniality of Power and Subalternity*, Quijano's (2000) *Coloniality of Power Eurocentrism and Latin America*, and many others argue that Western academic theory and practice are complicit in continuing colonisation across the globe. Stuart Hall (2007) describes how Europeans created and maintained Western dominance through the power of discourse, using European language and ideas to represent the Other as different (and inferior) while excluding the Other from the production of discourses.

Smith (1999) argues that Indigenous Peoples are in many ways oppressed by theories. She identifies the struggles between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the ways Western discourses resist others. As a Maori woman, she writes, 'From a vantage point of the colonised, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term research is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonisation' (p. 1). In line with Smith, Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives typically reside outside the publishing mainstream, dominated by Western academia; hence, the knowledge about the Indigenous Peoples in Australia, the US, Canada, Latin America, and other countries have been predominantly written by non-Indigenous researchers. Similarly, the perceived knowledge about the Chakma is based on the history written by the British coloniser, the Pakistani historians, and the current Bangladeshi writers – never the Chakma. It is partly in this sense that the Chakma represent the Subaltern, as I discuss in more detail later.

I understand that history and knowledge production is always political, and it reflects the voice of the victor, the powerful, and the privileged rather than those who are subalternised (see epigraph of this chapter). For Chakmas, the history of the region was written by the Bengalis. Before that, it was penned by the British, and even before that, the Persian court historians of the Mughal rulers; never by the Chakmas. What we know about the Chakmas, the knowledge created about the Chakmas, even if it is claimed as historical facts, has been written by the privileged ruling classes of the day. Even today's postcolonial Bangladesh – as far as the Chakmas are concerned – continues to be colonised by the Bengalis (K. Chakma & Hill, 2013; Kabir & R. Chowdhury, 2021). The Chakmas have always been represented by historians and privileged knowledge producers in power and have remained subalternised because they have not been allowed to produce their own knowledge, or to write their own history. Therefore, whatever documented accounts of Chakma history we see now in curriculum,

on social media, in music, and folklore or short stories are primarily based on historical antecedents penned by non-Chakmas. This view, based on Foucauldian premises of history as a discourse is where, the privileged (in this case, the Bengalis) establish truths that remain uncontested until studies – such as this one – are written, and layers of épistémès (Foucault, 1978) are exposed.

Such an incomplete and fragmented view of history and knowledge also further justifies the need for an autobiographical element in this study, which allows me to use my own experiences, which are not included and will never be included in any documented history. I grew up learning about a particular version of the history of the birth of Bangladesh as a nation in 1971, just like my Bengali counterparts, which is a reflection of how Bengalis view the history of the nation, the knowledge they hold about the Chakma. For example, nowhere in the school textbooks is it mentioned that Mujibur Rahman asked all the people to ‘upgrade’ themselves to Bengalis. My own experiences as a Chakma growing up under a military regime are no less important than the official history that is disseminated through textbooks in formal education. My employment of autobiographical elements throughout the thesis is one way in which I can utilise counter-discourses towards an approximation of the realities that constitute the background to this study.

In a sign that shows that counter-discourses have started to form, Chakmas have started writing, documenting, and creating their own history. One such writer is Bhumitra Chakma, a professor at Hull University in the United Kingdom, who is recording the history of the Chakma, whose research work is cited prominently in this study. Others include Kabita Chakma, with whose poem I start Chapter 1; Mikado Chakma, a poet who is documenting Chakma folklore and poetry; Tufan Chakma (*Appendix VIII*), who is creating visual representations of the historically significant characters; and Debashish Chakma, whose work is reviving the Chakma traditional costumes for women and men. Furthermore, a group of young activists and journalists called *The Silenced Voices of CHT* are documenting and constantly updating the recent happenings on Twitter. I myself started this PhD journey to document and demonstrate how Chakmas have become vocal and to highlight their educational achievements.

To understand Chakmas’ educational affordances and achievements, it is important first to problematise the ongoing struggle for Indigenous recognition and its importance for the Chakmas and other ethnic minorities in the CHT and minorities from the plains. Therefore, I will first discuss issues related to Chakma and Indigeneity, then discuss the importance of education for the Chakma, and finally how education has provided the opportunity for the educated Chakma to immigrate to a first-world country like Australia.

## 2.2 Chakma and Indigeneity

Chakmas, along with other minority communities, have been demanding to be officially recognised as Indigenous/Adivasis in Bangladesh for many years; however, to date, they have been unable to do so. The Bangladeshi Government keeps ignoring their demands and continues to use derogatory terms that are vehemently rejected by all the communities in the CHT. In 2011, during the Bangladeshi constitution's 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, a group of representatives from the CHT submitted a proposal demanding constitutional recognition of their identity as Indigenous Peoples/Adivasis. However, the amendment was passed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011, without any mention of Indigenous Peoples or Adivasi; instead, new terms were introduced, such as *Upo-jati* sub-nation, *khudro jatishotta* minor races, ethnic sects, or *khudro shomproday* minor communities, to be used officially instead of Indigenous/Adivasi. Dhamai (2014) argues that the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment 'has violated the rights of self-determination, determining own identity as Adivasi/Indigenous Peoples' (p. 21). It was received as a strong setback for the Indigenous communities and human rights activists, and the demand continues.

In Bangladesh, the World's Indigenous Peoples Day is becoming increasingly popular, and the day is now openly and publicly celebrated. The Indigenous People in Bangladesh have been demanding to improve their socio-economic position and eliminate suffering from ongoing marginalisation, social stigmatisation, political discrimination, and lack of control of the economy (Gerharz, 2014). Since the late 1990s, Bangladeshi Indigenous representatives have become more involved in Indigenous recognition and Indigenous rights activism, including transnational activist networks (TANs) and liaising with other Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Thailand, and the Philippines (Gerharz, 2014). One of the crucial facilitators in making global connections is the engagement in exchanging knowledge and experience with these communities. These networks work as pressure groups beyond borders (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), supporting Indigenous activism, following the global movement announcement of two consecutive UN Decades of Indigenous Peoples, and attempting to define who Indigenous people are and how they shall be protected, as they are still officially not recognised as Indigenous Peoples by the Bangladeshi nation-state.

When the United Nations proclaimed the First Decade for Indigenous Peoples' rights in 1995, it confirmed the need to develop appropriate mechanisms for protecting the rights of the Indigenous Peoples on a global scale. However, this issue had already been on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) agenda (Pelican, 2009) regarding prevention in the Discrimination and Protection of Minorities that later instigated the formation of a Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) in 1982 (Pelican, 2009). One of the WGIP tasks was to develop a draft Declaration, completed in 1993. Still, it took 14 additional years to reach the final version of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, finally adopted in the UN General Assembly in 2007 (Oldham & Miriam, 2008). Before the

Second UN Decade's announcement for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2005-2014), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, a coordinating advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, was established in 2000. Since 2001 Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy, had been working as a permanent member in the forum, representing the Indigenous Peoples of Bangladesh (Gerharz, 2014). Several Bangladeshi activists have also had the opportunity to participate in the United Nations' activities to learn the UN mechanics to deal with Indigenous rights and related issues, such as World Conferences and Fellowship Programme under which Indigenous People can visit the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva (C. K. Roy, 2004).

Bangladeshi human rights activists comprehensively use the term Indigenous Peoples when referring to the CHT inhabitants, while the Indigenous People themselves now broadly identify themselves as Indigenous in articulating their claims globally. As the Chakma Chief, R. D. Roy (2004) argues for the working definition to be recognised as Indigenous in the UN institution's agreement on prior inhabitants rather than original inhabitants of the CHT region, for which the right to self-determination is central.

In India, the term Adivasi has gained more popularity, which is now widely accepted by the activists to avoid racial superiority and postcolonial policies of exclusion inherent in the term tribal (Gerharz, 2014). Aligning with India, in Bangladesh, people primarily from the CHT and dominated by the Chakma because of the acknowledgement of the CHT's special status under the colonial rule providing space for emerging intellect elites (Gerharz, 2014), have come to incorporate the language of Indigeneity in the last 20 years and have started to refer to themselves as Indigenous Peoples, the Bengali equivalent term to Adivasi. Currently, multiple terms are used interchangeably, such as Adivasi, *Pahari* Hill People, or *Jumma* - these are all terms accepted by the communities.

In the next section, an account of the newly arisen political debate about Chakma's belongingness to Bangladesh will be discussed.

### 2.2.1 The Politics of Indigeneity, Othering, and Belongingness

Bangladesh is one of the 11 states that abstained from voting on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Mohsin, 2010). According to the official Bangladeshi representatives, the reason is that there is no clear definition of who Indigenous Peoples are, and to date, Bangladesh has not recognised any of its marginal communities as Indigenous Peoples (Ahmed, 2010). Ahmed (2010) argues that Bangladesh's position in this regard is inconsistent and ambivalent in both policy and action. For example, previously, it argued that the ethnic communities in Bangladesh do not match the stereotypes of Native Americans or the Australian Aboriginal People. Therefore, it was argued that there are no Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2010).

Contrary to its previous position, on another recent occasion, the Bangladeshi government declared that everyone in Bangladesh is Indigenous (B. Chakma, 2018). The explanation for that was that the entire population had been living there for several millennia – therefore, they were regarded as the original inhabitants. Mohsin (2002) believes that because Bangladesh follows a highly integrationist domestic policy regarding all marginal ethnic communities, including the Chakma, it is not surprising to see the nation-state's actual stance in providing the rightfully entitled to the status of the Indigenous People. In short, since the entire populations are Indigenous, there is no moral or political justification to accord such special legal status to a particular group of people against the majority Bengalis. This was the government's clever way to exclude considering any special status for Chakmas and other minorities in the name of homogeneity, which is the same thing Mujibur Rahman was demanding from Chakmas. This can be seen as an example of the government's hegemonic tool of control through consent (Gramsci, 1978).

The self-identified Indigenous communities have emphasised official recognition as Indigenous Peoples, particularly emphasising the importance of land and control over resources (Mohsin, 2010). However, Bangladesh has stated that self-identification should not be allowed; its position with the definition of Indigenous Peoples at the international level represents a positivist approach (Ahmed, 2010). The country treats Indigenous Peoples as a legal category requiring precise definition based on which it will determine who are or are not Indigenous Peoples. Ahmed (2010) argues that, like many other Asian countries, Bangladesh also relies on a definitional argument in opposing recognition of the rights attached to Indigenous Peoples. ILO Convention No. 169, of which Bangladesh is a signatory state, defines Indigenous People as,

On account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country . . . at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their social, economic, cultural, and political institutions (ILO Convention, No. 169).

This definition of Indigenous people concurs with Cobo's (1986) '*Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous populations*', that emphasises elements such as historical events of suffering through invasion or colonisation of the Indigenous communities, self-identification as a distinct community, and having non-dominant status but the determination to preserve ancestral land. Daes (1994) also developed the concept of Indigenous Peoples based on Cobo's (1986) definition. R. D. Roy (2004) and B. Chakma (2018) strongly argue that Chakmas deserve to be recognised as Indigenous based on the above definitions; they have been in non-dominant positions in all possible ways since British colonisation.

Mignolo (2001), an Argentine semiotician and professor, and Quijano (2000), a Peruvian sociologist and humanist thinker, have written extensively about how strongly colonisation has affected the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America, through, for example, demographic deterioration, enslavement, punishment for resistance, and destruction of the natural environment. Quijano (2000) argues that colonisation has deeply affected the formation of the modern world-system. One of these effects is the internal colonialism that European colonisation has handed over to the nation-states, resulting in the economic and political subordination of the minorities and the Indigenous Peoples.

Historically, minority groups are the Others of our societies. Many ethnic minority communities have always been subjected to uneven power relationships where majorities or the dominant groups made the rules and norms with respect to the participation of all in the social, political, and economic systems shared in a country, thereby Othering them. Many aspects of these ethnic minority communities are determined by the dominant majority culture, starting from what language they are allowed to speak, the way to educate their children, and/or the cultural practices they are permitted to perform. In this process, the cultural ethos of many minority cultures was strangled, and their voices were suppressed.

In Bangladesh, Chakmas are currently experiencing an unprecedentedly heightened level of Otherness. Debates about who is Indigenous/Adivasi have remained a contested issue to date; adding to that, whether Chakmas actually belong to Bangladesh at all has recently become another contested issue. In fact, since I started writing the thesis more than three years ago, I have observed that there is a growing debate as to whether the Chakma are true Bangladeshis. Many top newspapers keep publishing articles in Bengali and English claiming that Chakmas do not belong to Bangladesh because they have immigrated from Myanmar. The majority of Bengalis on social media remain vocal, believing the CHT inhabitants are intruders or outsiders and should neither be granted Indigenous status nor referred to as Indigenous/Adivasi. Anecdotal evidence and my conversations with the knowledgeable *murubbis* in the community reveal a shared belief among the Chakma community that the controversy whether the Chakma belong to Bangladesh or not and other such *ushkanimulok* inflammatory debates are kept afloat intentionally, as this aids the government's position not to recognise the Chakma as Indigenous/Adivasi.

Nevertheless, Indigenous representatives in Bangladesh have currently become increasingly vocal and, at the same time, eloquent (Gerharz, 2014) in demanding both Indigenous recognition and action against Othering them. Activism explicitly criticising the nation state's policies dating back to the early days of postcolonial state formation, when the Pakistani government decided to construct the Kaptai dam in the 1960s. A. Chakma (2015) writes that activists from the CHT have partnered with plain land

Adivasi representatives to form a national movement. Currently, organisations, such as the Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum, fight for minority rights, especially Indigenous rights which demand the inclusion of Indigenous People in the Bengali-dominated policymaking for a more democratic, diverse, and plural society (van Schendel, 2001). I, too, strongly believe it is necessary not only to include the Indigenous representatives in policymaking but also to accord their people's special status as deserving of protection, particularly regarding the Indigenous people's land rights so as to ensure their due access and rights to their own land.

Acquiring land rights is the prime agenda of the Indigenous Peoples because land rights are fundamental rights regardless of the country (Mohsin, 2010). Losing territories, ancestral domains, and divested of political power, the Indigenous Peoples are considered second-class citizens (B. Chakma, 2018). Every decision made by the political actors overlooks and adversely affects the land rights of these people. The primary effect of losing land, territories, and natural resources means that they are losing identity, culture, the customary land tenure system, and spiritual values, resulting in creation of adverse situations where their existence is now under threat (B. Chakma, 2010, 2016, 2018).

However, state-created discourses have remained firmly against the Indigenous Peoples' demands. Visser (2015) argues that Indigeneity and land rights are interwoven in a meta-narrative that helps identify one's place in the world. Indigeneity provides the CHT people an essential category of belonging to their ancestral land, which the Bangladeshi nation-state has clearly failed to recognise. In claiming their indigeneity and their lands, they are trying to protect the Indigenous culture and identity; the Indigenous discourse is a way to articulate a connection to the CHT region, the land their Indigenous claim refers to, providing a sense of security and belonging. This claim invokes the counter-argument in the recent debate on the question of their belongingness. As P. Chakma (2021) says, 'We want to ensure and protect the land rights of the Indigenous Peoples, and we want to live with dignity in our own country' (p. 10). Kuper (2003), too, believes that the Indigenous claim is 'fundamentally concerned with culture and identity' (p. 390), which is the case for the Chakma. The importance of Indigeneity has become a tool and an identifying marker for them as they grow more aware of the international Indigenous Peoples' discourses (Visser, 2015) that have provided access to rights and political spaces accorded to them by international rights law.

It is not only the comparatively recent demand for Indigenous recognition that the CHT people are dealing with; in fact, I argue that they have always experienced discrimination because of their position as oppressed and subjugated – the subaltern position – which has never changed since British colonisation.

### 2.2.2 Indigeneity, Coloniality, and the Subaltern Chakma

Subalterns are often described as persons who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure, such as the Chakmas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), and hence, in this study, subalternity is an important concept and of central interest to situate the political and social unrest the Chakmas have been experiencing in Bangladesh. The history of a state is essentially the history of the ruling class. The ruling state's supremacy entails two essential characteristics: domination of intellectual and moral leadership (Ahmed, 2010). According to Gramsci (1937), people belonging to a subaltern class are always subject to the ruling class's activity, or in the Chakma's case, to the activity of the ruling nation-state, Bangladesh.

In this study, the subalterns are seen as a collective community, the Indigenous Peoples/Adivasis who are fighting for their identities, cultures, and land rights against the state, Bangladesh, the hub of elite discourses which holds maximum power over society, over the Indigenous Peoples and the Chakma. Chakmas thus fit into Spivak's (1988) notion of the subaltern; they are within the hegemonic discourse wanting to be heard but not being allowed to because of the Bangladesh nation-state's mechanism of discrimination against them. However, Spivak cautions against confusing the oppressed with the notion of subalternity (Kock, 1992). She argues that subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed because, in postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the discourses of cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. She argues that while all subalterns are oppressed, not all the oppressed are subalterns. For example, the working class is oppressed but not subaltern since they have access to the hegemonic discourse. Subalterns are rendered mute (Trowler, 2013) by the epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988) of hegemonic discourse. As a result, in order to be heard, Chakmas, whom Trowler (2013) believes to be subalterns, 'must adopt the thought, reasoning, and language of the dominant group and can never express their own reasoning, forms of knowledge, and reasoning' (p. 44), which has been, as discussed above, going on in the CHT for many decades.

Although the word subaltern originally meant someone of inferior rank in the army (Ahmed, 2010), the term's semantic range has evolved from its first usage by Guha (1982); Gramsci used the term non-dominant to denote the Subaltern in opposition to Italy's hegemonic and dominant class, the bourgeoisie. Guha (1982) took the idea and reconceptualised subalternity, in a way markedly different from its original Gramscian usage, to portray the unique Indian context, 'signifying a hierarchical, dialectical, and contextual relation of superordination and subordination between the elite and the subalterns in colonial India' (A. R. Chowdhury, 2016, p. 2). Subaltern people are those who belong to non-dominant positions in society and the state, oppressed and subjugated by the elites in their everyday life. Therefore, subaltern history is opposed to the elitist, the dominant group's colonialist, or neo-colonist types. There are, however, moments of outbursts when these marginalised subaltern



groups rebel against their subjugation, as stated by Guha (1982) and Spivak (1988), just like the Chakma are questioning, rebelling against the Bangladesh nation-state's oppression and domination.

Guha subsequently used the concept of Subaltern to signify anyone in India who did not belong to the elite. Therefore, he included peasants, workers, impoverished landlords, and others whose behaviour exhibited a combination of defiance and deference to the elites, attributing elite status to class, gender, caste, age. Guha brought the role of subaltern subjectivity into the history of the anti-colonial struggle in India. He heavily criticised the elitist biases that meant the Indian nationalistic leaders in power neglected to recognise the role of the common people or the subalterns in the anti-colonial struggle (A. R. Chowdhury, 2016). The term subaltern now expands to any person or group of inferior rank, whether because of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion, to the politically oppressed, the powerless people and those in non-dominant positions and so on (Amin & Chakrabarty, 1996; Chatterjee & Jeganathan, 2000; Nandy, 1996; Spivak, 1988). In this subaltern category, the Chakma are included as a marginal community who are now aspiring to the status of Indigenous Peoples (Ahmed, 2010).

Burger (2013) writes in the context of the CHT during the British Empire, 'possessions were acquired without much consideration of the peoples, their way of life or their well-being' (p. 335). With the independence of India and the creation of a Muslim state composed of two regions on either side of India (see Section 1.3.1), there was little interest in the fate of a small number of predominantly Buddhist Hill Peoples in the rapid and ill-thought departure of Britain from the region under the stewardship of Lord Mountbatten. Burger believes,

If the rights of self-determination of the Hill Peoples had been taken into account, perhaps an arrangement might have been made, and half a century of conflict that has left thousands dead and untold misery might have been averted. But this was not to be, and the region has suffered and continues to suffer inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence (Burger, 2013, p. 335).

Burger (2013) succinctly notes how little the British considered the CHT region and its people's well-being and how that would affect them so adversely. The legacy of colonisation and independence left numerous Indigenous Peoples in the Indian subcontinent region in a perpetual state of conflict that remains as much a reality today as 60 years ago (B. Chakma, 2018). Because the Bangladesh nation-state still holds the colonial mentality in its post-colonial state, the Chakma also remain subaltern.

Guha explored the links between coloniality and subalternity in great detail in one of his classic works, *Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography* (1989). Guha's opening sentences, 'there was one Indian battle that Britain never won. It was a battle for the appropriation of the Indian past' (p.

210) reveal that subalternity and colonial difference presuppose each other (Mignolo, 2001). Guha argues subalternity is a subordinate class and subordinated social organisations and histories within the state's structure of power, for example, between England and India until 1947, and continues by saying,

A colonialist knowledge, its function was to erect that past as a pedestal on which the triumphs and glories of colonisers and their instrument, the colonial state, could be displayed to best advantage. Indian history assimilated to the history of Great Britain, would henceforth be used as a comprehensive measure of the difference between the peoples of those two countries. Politically that difference was spelt out as one between rulers and ruled (p. 211).

Here Guha (1989), as Mignolo (2001) interprets, conceptualises power as a complex matrix of dominance through three interrelated points: colonialism, capitalism, and intellectual and academic critiques of hegemony and domination. Quijano (2000) later coined the term coloniality of power in which he describes a colonial matrix of power to show the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism, which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present (Martinot, 2008).

The subaltern historians in the Indian Subcontinent have meticulously pinpointed the various ways of interaction between the oppressed and the oppressor who were primarily affected by British colonisation in India to the detriment of their political power, land tenures, economy, cultural distinctiveness, and so on (A. R. Chowdhury, 2016). In critical theory and postcolonialism, the term Subaltern designates the populations which are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the Colony and of the Colonial homeland (Jain, 2017).

From the late 1980s, many postcolonial theorists, such as Bhabha (1994), emphasised the importance of social power relations in defining subaltern social groups as oppressed racial minorities whose social presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group. Spivak (1988), through her subaltern theory, argues that the world's poorest people, the most excluded members of society, and those without education or jobs are the subaltern people who have no voice in society. She claims that the local elite, the officials, educators, religious leaders, and Western scholars can never faithfully speak for them, as there are simply no means to reach them. Although it is often impossible to define who exactly subalterns are, Spivak (1988) defines them as those resting outside of political, social, and economic power, a general non-specialist, non-academic population, including the 'illiterate peasantry, the tribals, and the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat' (p. 283).

Similarly, in Bangladesh, the government and people in power do not hear the communities when they demand Indigenous/Adivasi recognition or require that the settlers be relocated on the plains (on 'plain land') so they can get their land back. Therefore, there is a gap between the sender and the receiver. No matter how hard Chakmas try to be heard by the Bangladesh nation-state through social media, petitions, or rallies, it appears that all these efforts are in vain. Similarly, Spivak gives an example of a poor peasant whose family never has enough to eat, no matter how hard he works, and whose struggle will never be heard in a way that will help their situation get any better. In the Latin American context, Mignolo (2001) pointed out the relationship between coloniality and subalternity to highlight that 'coloniality is the machine that reproduces subalternity today in the form of global coloniality in the network society' (p. 426).

In the next section, I contextualise the ongoing politics of the 13 ethnic minorities' identities in the CHT, although my main focus will be on the Chakma as this study is about them. I argue that alongside struggling with several types of oppression, as discussed in chapter 1 and this chapter, the fundamental struggle for the Chakma has been the identity that they have never been able to choose; in other words, their identity has always been a part of the historical forces of colonisation. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, where we live in a technologically advanced, globalised era, it is almost anachronistic that Chakmas are still fighting for something as fundamental as their identity.

### 2.2.3 Colonisation of the Chakma Identity

Having a chosen identity of the Chakma within Bangladesh has always been problematic and contested, just as identifying or recognising the people in the CHT as Indigenous/Adivasis has been an ongoing political issue. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.3), ever since Bangladesh was born, the political identity of Bengali hegemony remained strong, with the Bengali identity dominating the non-Bengali identities. Mohsin (2010) explains that the Hill People of the CHT rejected this hegemonic imposition and have been fighting to be acknowledged as Adivasis/Indigenous Peoples rather than being identified by the derogatory terms that have been imposed upon them.

The identities of the CHT people have been invented and reinvented across time and various regimes. Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy (2003) writes that prior to colonial occupation, the CHT and its inhabitants lived independently in a sovereign territory under the customary tribal administrative and judicial system – a customary land tenure and taxation system with village-level adjudication practices, which had been practised since time immemorial (N. Uddin, 2010). The system had three-layered administrative systems under the Raja (tribal king), the Headman (head of a particular taxation territory), and the Karbari (village head). The Bengalis referred to the Hill People as Joomea (slash and burn farmers) (N. Uddin, 2010), and there was no conscious politics of identity practised either by the

majority Bengalis or by any external rulers (R. D. Roy, 2003). Indeed, many of the marginal communities who had once been politically autonomous lost their authority which they exercised at the time of initial colonisation (Ahmed, 2010). In this section, I provide a brief chronology of how the CHT people and their identity have been colonised and politicised from the British colonisation to the current time.

The identity politics of the Chakma began with the colonial policy adopted to deal with the CHT region (known *Joomea* at that time). After the British East India Company defeated the last Nawab (native governor during the time of the Moghul Empire) of Bengal, Sirajuddula, in the Battlefield of Plassey (known as Palashy in Bengali) in 1757, they occupied the Indian Subcontinent and made it a British colony. In 1760, the British East India Company annexed neighbouring Bengal and then turned its attention towards the Chittagong Hill Tracts because the region was of significant economic interest, rich in natural resources, including cotton, trees, spices, food grains, and animals of various kinds (N. Uddin, 2010). British imperialists first colonised the CHT as the common trend in the region's history of sub-Himalayan mountain areas. R. D. Roy (2003) writes,

The CHT was first colonised, not by a kingdom or empire from neighbouring plains, but by the British imperialists. In the case of the CHT, the British were motivated both by strategic and economic interests, and they achieved their aims through military deployment and diplomatic subterfuge, leading ultimately to an explorative trade treaty, and eventually, direct colonisation. (p. 4)

Levene (1999) recorded how the Chakma Raja Sher Daulat Khan strongly resisted a military campaign by the British in the CHT in 1776, which resulted in a fight that continued for a decade. The British reacted to this by cutting off essential supplies and imposing an economic embargo. However, seeing the fate of the people with a struggling economy, the Chakma Raja was forced to sign a bilateral treaty to end the decade-long fight, which stipulated that he would pay 20 *maund* (80 kilograms) of cotton for the right to trade. However, one might argue that to exercise power, the British renamed the entire region as Karpas Mahal (cotton area), and it remained Karpas Mahal until 1860 after the British partitioned the Hill Tracts from Chittagong district. The CHT Manual Law (see Section 1.2.3) was passed in 1900 designating it as an excluded area to preserve the culture and tradition of the CHT people (R. D. Roy, 2003). Throughout the British colonial period, the Act of 1900 functioned as a safeguard for the CHT people since it prohibited land ownership by non-Hill people and the migration of non-Hill People.

Indeed, the British colonial period was an important period in the politics of identity formation of the CHT people in many ways. Firstly, most of the documentation on the CHT people as hill-men that

shaped their identity came from the writings of British colonial administrations (N. Uddin, 2010) that reflect how European intellectuals viewed non-Western people as primitive, exotic, uncivilised, savages, and wild hill tribes that were replicated in the writings of Hutchinson (1906) and Lewin (1869). As a superintendent of the CHT, Lewin published a book in 1870, *The Wild Race in South Eastern India*, using such terms and this type of colonial construction and invention of the identity of the CHT inhabitants as a wild race. This was the colonial fantasy (Tripura, 1992) that led to the establishment of the terms that exist today. Once the British left, the CHT was to endure more challenges concerning its people's identity, another step towards becoming powerless and unable to have their voices heard in deciding their own identity.

From the very beginning, the Pakistani government looked at the CHT people with suspicion, with an eye of mistrust for being anti-Pakistani during the partition (Ahmed, 2010; N. Uddin, 2010). The CHT people experienced discrimination in most aspects, in business, employment, education, and many other sectors of government and semi-government organisations (B. Chakma, 2010). There were several reasons why the Pakistani government discriminated against the CHT people. Firstly, on the eve of partition, an Indian national flag was hoisted in a few areas in Rangamati, and a Burmese national flag in Bandarban (Barua, 2001). The Pakistani government treated this as disloyal, as an anti-Pakistani act, considering the CHT people as pro-Indian and pro-Burmese. Secondly, as the partition took place based on a two-nation theory of religious identity, due to the non-Muslim demography in the CHT and cultural differences, the Pakistani government never treated them fairly (B. Chakma, 2014). The Chakma elites and other leaders wanted the CHT to be included in India. As mentioned in Section 1.2.1, the Pakistani government amended the 1900 Manual Act as they viewed it as a legacy of the British colonial administration; a result of this was the Kaptai Dam project (see Section 1.2.1).

I assert that the Pakistani state created new discourses in the identity and oppression of the CHT people as the region changed from an excluded area (made by the British) to a tribal area – the beginning of the marginalisation, oppression, and the ongoing politics with their identity that they would have to endure from the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. During these times, the identity of the CHT people shifted from hill-men to what was broadly referred to as tribal (N. Uddin, 2010), which was used in a derogatory way, in the sense that the tribal people were very different from other people of Pakistan, denoting they were primitive, illiterate, nude, wild, uncivilised, therefore, inferior (B. Chakma, 2014; N. Uddin, 2010; van Schendel, 2010). However, in exercising its power over the minorities, Bangladesh has exceeded what the British and Pakistan; it has done so by militarising the CHT region, bringing in settlers from plain lands, and applying systematic subjugation and discrimination that has been going on for the last 50 years.

As discussed in Chapter 1, from the start, the Bangladesh government denied the rights of the ethnic minorities' to be granted autonomy to the CHT and to have the 1900 CHT Manual Act revived or one of similar stature instated with a prohibition of settlement of Bengalis in the CHT. In fact, N. Uddin (2010) provides some accounts of how the Bangladeshi writers and scholars contributed to the crisis that the CHT people had undergone by creating negative discourses with their identity. For example, some prominent authors described the CHT people as, 'wild tribes, crude, primitive and aboriginal . . . they were strange, wild inhabitants . . . their culture was "exotic". . . [they] relish cannibalistic diets . . . they take the meat of all animals' (Sattar as cited in N. Uddin, 2010, p. 288). This type of narrative compounded the negative discourses created by the British (hill-men) and Pakistani Government (tribal) by continuing the colonial legacy of thinking regarding the CHT and the identity of its people.

Similar to Pakistani's invention of the tribal identity, the Bangladesh government invented a new identity for the CHT people as *Upo-jati* to undermine and degrade them as inferior lower-ranked people, who did not deserve to be recognised as a *jati* nation, with the prefix *upo* denoting incomplete – sub-nation, sub-human, and half-wild. An example of this could be seen in what Mujibur Rahman said during a tour through the CHT on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1973, 'from today, there are no tribal sub-groups in Bangladesh; everyone is a Bengali' (Mohaiemen, 2010, p. 27).

I contend that the invention of *Upo-jati* took the level of colonising the identity to another level in placing the ethnic minority communities in marginalised, subjugated, and oppressed positions. At the same time, forcible conversion and religious prosecution were added as a new method of assimilation (Mohaiemen, 2010) to destroy the *Jumma* identity by converting thousands of *Jumma* people to Islam. Mohaiemen (2010) reports that in 1986 alone, within a period of eight months, 54 Buddhist temples were destroyed by the Bangladesh military and 22 Hindu temples were burnt (p. 5). One can only imagine the current situation of the CHT; the government only allows the publishing of false and fabricated news officially (Mohsin, 2010). Currently, it is estimated that the numbers of Bengali people have surpassed those of the *Jumma* people in their own region (M. S. Chowdhury, 2018).

Over the last 50 years, terms that are more derogatory have been invented, as mentioned in Section 2.2, such as *khudro-nrigoshthi*, *khudro-jatishotta* accentuated the ongoing negative representations and discourses in the media, newspapers, online portals, and on various social media. The State's politics of creating identity by nomenclature has spread extensively, and the majority of the Bengalis now refuse to address the CHT people as anything but *Upo-jati* despite strong resistance from the local people. As a result of ongoing discrimination, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the ethnic minorities welcomed the *Jumma* identity to show unity and separate themselves from the Bengalis. The struggle continues, and the demand to implement the Peace Accord has remained unresolved, in particular

the constitutional recognition of the *Jumma* people as national, ethnic minorities with guarantees of full autonomy, restoration of traditional land rights, demilitarisation of the area, and withdrawal and resettlement of the Bengali settlers from the plain lands (Mohsin, 2000). The fight that started and was led by the Chakmas right after Bangladesh became a nation-state continues, and now the battle is to be recognised as one for the identity of Indigenous/Adivasi. I believe all these have been possible because, among the other Indigenous communities, Chakmas are the most educated, leading the fight towards land rights, human rights, and above all, Indigenous recognition.

In the following two sections, I will discuss the importance of education for Indigenous people first and then focus on the Chakma specifically and how they have used their educational affordances to effect life-altering changes by immigrating to first-world countries like Australia.

## 2.3 Indigenous People and Education

Education and development are intertwined. Through education, a country develops its productive human resources that serve as the engine of social and economic transformation. In the modern globalised world, education systems are designed to facilitate a number of different roles according to different circumstances, to transmit knowledge, skills, and values to the next generation, to teach them to become good citizens (Stavenhagen, 2015). The purpose of education is to help people to learn and understand on their own, such as the bilingual education system for the Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan and the Philippines (Chung, 2002).

However, Indigenous People in most countries are deprived of even the very basic education. In many cases, they are highly oppressed and discriminated against by nation-states, suffering from poverty, discrimination, and sociocultural marginalisation issues (B. Chakma, 2010; Jacob, Cheng & Porter, 2015). Hays (2011) argues that when it comes to their experiences within formal education systems, they share an identifiable pattern; challenges that are complex, unknown, and different from their own community learning environment result in lower educational performance levels, higher dropout rates, and even lower representation in higher education.

Most Indigenous People are also excluded from mainstream education, the healthcare system, and employment opportunities. According to Champagne (2006), the schools run by nation-states are alien to Indigenous children because public school settings are not prepared socially and culturally to respectfully accommodate Indigenous children and appropriately address their needs. Instead, they are simply taught to assimilate by accepting the language, traditions and values of the mainstream institutes, often rejecting the customs and values of their own traditions and knowledge. In addition, Indigenous communities and their children around the world have suffered enormously from somewhat unsympathetic and often abusive education systems (Jacob, Cheng & Porter, 2015).

Participation in a particular type of colonialist educational institution (Ma Rhea, 2015) often entails a shift in focus away from their own culture and can seriously undermine identity and community relationships. Effective education must be able to help bridge current educational gaps between the nation-states and the Indigenous populations.

International organisations, declarations, and conventions that deal specifically with people and the rights of people all address education as being most crucial. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 (1989) and the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) are among the most prominent ones. The ILO convention includes two important statements:

- Measures shall be taken to ensure that members of the Indigenous Peoples concerned have the opportunity to acquire education at all levels on at least an equal footing with the rest of the national community (Article 26)
- Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UNDRIP in Article 14)

Unfortunately, most nation-states fail in addressing the rights of Indigenous Peoples described in these two Articles. As argued by Ma Rhea (2015), ‘the foundations of the problems lie in the mainstream formal education system which was exported from colonial administrators, rarely considering the local communities and the people’ (p. 13). Without education, an individual is also less likely to be fully knowledgeable of their legal rights.

Governments in some countries have taken initiatives to help the Indigenous People through the provision of equitable education. The Chinese government, for example, has adopted a series of laws and regulations to help protect the rights, unique cultures, and languages of ethnic minority peoples (Yi, 2008) by using a bilingual education policy. Yi (2008) believes substantial educational achievements have been observed for ethnic minorities since 1949. However, the implementation of such bilingual education policies has been criticised in many cases where it is only a transitional means, a process for students to focus on the dominant language, Mandarin, as they are taught in their native language for only the first two years of schooling, after which Mandarin takes over as the mode of instruction from grade three and subsequently. It is the same in secondary and higher education.

Such bilingually subtractive transitional programs are somewhat similar to the recent programs in Bangladesh. The government in the CHT started teaching four ethnic languages, including Chakma, from 2012, which were introduced as a subject to serve as a bridge during the first years of pre-primary



and primary education in government schools. This language inclusion aimed to reduce early dropouts among ethnic minority children and increase the chances to continue into secondary education in the national language, Bengali (A. Chakma, 2015). To sustain this initiative, I argue, there is a greater need to continue with these languages at least until children finish primary school.

A successful example of such an initiative can be seen in what the Philippines' government has been doing since 2012 with the Pulangiyan community. The curriculum in primary school is culture-based to ensure children are aware of their cultural identity and learn in their mother tongue about traditions, local issues such as trade and livelihood, and land productivity (Cornelio & Castro, 2016). The national language Filipino is introduced in Grade Three and English in Grade Four; at the same time, students participate in community activities so that they can learn directly from their elders (Cornelio & Castro, 2016). The dropout rate reduced significantly, with commendable grades, and students make a smooth transition from primary to secondary education.

Taiwan took a somewhat different approach to education. In 2002 the government made a major change in education policy by introducing the Culture and Language Proficiency Test. Students who wanted to enter secondary and higher education were required to pass the test (Chung, 2002) to encourage students to learn about their own language and culture. Students who attend secondary education have the opportunity to study in their own languages from Grades 1 to 12, which is remarkably different from other countries. However, the assimilation process seems to be faster among Taiwanese people as higher education encourages them to move to urban areas seeking employment and better living standards (Chung, 2002), and many of them no longer speak their language resulting in eventual cultural genocide (Cheng & Jacob, 2008).

As mentioned above, achievements in higher education for Indigenous communities are even worse, with fewer representations in professional fields such as in medicine, law, engineering than in the dominant population (Ewen, 2011; Ma Rhea, 2009). Higher education has been found to be significantly related to the human development index, and this is even more so for disadvantaged groups (K. M. Joshi & Basu, 2013), such as ethnic minorities. In Australia, for example, according to Trudgett (2009), in 2008, only 0.6% of Indigenous students did study by research and with 0.3% doctoral completions, despite the fact that Australian Indigenous people account for 3% of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

Reynolds (2005) reports that the reasons are mainly due to, firstly, decades of assimilation policies of the ruling government. Secondly, formal assessment in education with very little or no consideration of Indigenous knowledge is used to systematically destroy the way of knowing and learning (Reynolds, 2005). Finally, these formal education initiatives have often had a long-lasting negative impact on

Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. Although white assimilationist policies do not exist anymore in countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States (Deyhle, 1995), according to Jacob and Ha (2009), some countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh (M. S. Chowdhury, 2010) continue to perpetuate active assimilation policies that in many ways threaten people's ability to preserve their languages, cultures, and identities.

Now that I have discussed the importance of education for the Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities, the next section will focus on the Chakma, their education, and achievements.

## 2.4 Chakma and Education

In this section, I elaborate on Section 1.3.6 about the Chakma and their educational achievements. Education is knowledge, and knowledge is the source of power, especially for marginalised, oppressed, disadvantaged, subaltern communities like the Chakmas. Bangladesh has about 1.2 million Indigenous People, which is just above 1 percent of the total population. As mentioned earlier (see Section 1.3.1), there are 13 communities in the CHT, most of them living in rural areas where there are no established schools. Each of these communities have their own language; however, in schools, none of them before 2012 was offered to study in their mother tongue. Demand for learning in their own mother tongue and other educational needs from the minority communities had been given almost no attention that they deserved until 2012. In Article 18 under the Pre-primary and Primary education section in the National Education Policy of Bangladesh (NEP; Ministry of Education, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2010), the initiative is described:

Measures will be taken to ensure the availability of teachers from ethnic groups and to prepare texts in their own languages so that ethnic children can learn their own languages. In these initiatives, especially in preparing textbooks, the inclusion of respective communities will be ensured. (NEP, 2010, p. 8)

Though many ethnic children finish primary education (Grade 5) due to the flexible promotion system (M. S. Chowdhury, 2010), many of them face difficulty at the secondary level, and the dropout rate is high. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS, 2013) recorded the dropout rate as 59% for ethnic minority children compared to the national 19.2% average. Another critical factor contributing to poor educational achievement is that most studies or research have been done by outsiders: non-Indigenous researchers thus reflect few perspectives regarding the real problems and gaps. Many scholars (Hill & May, 2013; Johnson, 2009; May, 2005) therefore argue that Indigenous People must be heard and involved in every aspect of education: in learning, teaching and researching – 'without a proactive effort to include Indigeneity in the curriculum, the inevitable loss of knowledge will occur over time' (Meaney & Evans 2013, p. 17). Research done by Indigenous

researchers will help document their own histories, ways of learning and teaching, test theories, and find solutions to their own problems and challenges through evidence-based studies (Riggs, 2005).

Education is evidently the determinant in achieving success in the social development of ethnic minorities, and the central purpose of education for them is to have a good life (Swain, 2005). The past few decades have witnessed a worldwide emphasis on education as the key to empowering underprivileged groups to overcome poverty or fight against discrimination and oppression (Swain, 2005). Swatuk (2005) writes how education in South Africa is closely linked to power and identity and believes to be educated means to be developed in a post-apartheid context. Swatuk (2005) writes that the once considered backward people, enslaved by ignorance, are now free to realise their individual and collective potential through the application of knowledge gained by education. In a similar manner, Chakmas are showing capabilities of rising to the level of their Bengali counterparts through education; and as K. Chowdhury (2017) argues, education lies at the centre of the struggle to recover the identity they desire, the Indigenous identity from the oppressive Bangladesh nation-state.

#### 2.4.1 Chakma and Higher Education

As discussed earlier, Chakmas, particularly in rural and remote hilly areas, face many challenges to receiving education, starting from language instruction, the distance of schools from home, and lack of proper support at home. However, the Kaptai Dam construction triggered an incentive to take education seriously; their primary focus became education, considering that there was no other way to sustain livelihoods and retain Chakma culture and identity. This emphasis on education appears to have gained more substantial importance for numerous reasons. For example, because of the ongoing resettlement of the settlers from the plain lands, scarcity of resources for agriculture production has been pushing the Indigenous families to consider alternative income sources. Getting university degrees in this regard is seen as an 'important asset' (Visser & Gerharz, 2016, p. 381).

Higher education is also seen as the key to envisioning a more modern future. To enter the higher echelons (Visser & Gerharz, 2016) of Bangladesh society, higher education is an essential prerequisite for the Indigenous Chakma. Formal education serves as a mark of distinction and a way to acquire linguistic and cultural competencies. Bowers (1997) documented that education enables people to partially meet the expectations of individual, economic, and political development. Formal education has brought apparent benefits, which many argue (Barua & Wilson, 2005; Shakya, 2008) have been adopted from the West and based on generalisations of culture, thoughts, practices. Despite these emphases, they have broadened the Chakma's outlook and contribute to greater awareness of Indigenous recognition and rights, the importance of female education, and so on.

While many writers believe formal education improves the Indigenous Peoples' social status, paradoxically, Western-based education systems provide opportunities to diversify professions and disconnects the Indigenous communities from their roots which is one of the aspects of diasporic Chakmas this thesis is investigating into. Barua and Wilson (2005) contend that the formal education system makes Indigenous communities neglect their traditional practices and Indigenous knowledge. In Nepal, for example, the Newars, an Indigenous community who have taken formal education successfully with a higher literacy rate than the Nepal national average (Shakya, 2008), are concerned that their culture is degrading. Many young Newars cannot speak the mother tongue any longer, whereas they are fluent in Nepali Bhasa and English.

Through this study, I argue that, on the contrary, Chakmas have been showing solid trends of reviving their tradition and culture predominantly because of their increased awareness of the global issues related to Indigeneity, *sui generis* rights, and the fundamental human rights that they are entitled to as Bangladeshi citizens, and they have done so alongside and through their educational achievements. I believe educational attainment has increased Chakma's capacity for better-informed decision-making skills with a more knowledgeable approach to understanding identity and culture retention. They are taking more nuanced, thoughtful steps towards their demands for Indigenous rights with international organisations' help (Mohsin, 2010). Anecdotal evidence shows that currently, many Chakma students are studying overseas for higher education, and the number of Chakma men and women enrolled in PhDs has increased significantly in many universities in North America, Australia, and Asia. These students keep closely connected to share their progress, their research areas, and often work together towards publishing empirical studies for the betterment of the CHT. It is not only in the higher education sector that Chakmas are showing progress; in other fields, such as graphic design, they are creating the history of the importance of many celebrations (*Appendix VIII*), documenting the historical relevance of *Bizu*, *ubogeet*, *alphaloni* – indeed some of these cultural practices are in the process of revival and revitalisation because of the educational achievements of the Chakma.

Chakmas appear to have come a long way since the Kaptai Dam incident in the 1960s. Earlier, there had been a lack of qualified professionals in the fields of education, medical science, engineering, and administrative roles. However, in recent years, there has been a vast increase in the number of educated people availing these professions (A. Uddin, 2015), and particularly in local based international NGOs such as UNDP, and UNICEF, Chakmas now often hold majority positions in different services as the most educated minority group from the CHT. Today, one will find among the Chakmas distinguished doctors, university lecturers, engineers, respectable government personnel, service holders, advocates, business owners, and the like. If one searches the Internet or Google, numerous

YouTube videos will appear on how to read the Chakma script or on collaborative work among the Chakma in India, in Myanmar, and in other countries – aspects of the Chakma culture that I thought were nearly lost.

#### 2.4.2 Chakma and Educational Achievements

This section was challenging to write because of the lack of empirical research on the educational achievements of the Chakma. I write this based on some historical accounts, anecdotal evidence, my interview with the Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy, and my intellectual conversations with my father and other Chakma academics. In the following section, I discuss some of the educational achievements of the Chakma.

As shown in the previous sections in this chapter, most Indigenous communities in most countries have literacy rates below the national average. Generally, the number of Indigenous Peoples with higher education is not promising. Chakmas, however, tell a different story when it comes to educational achievements. Despite having no opportunity to formally study in the Chakma language before 2012, Chakmas have remained focused on education. For them, education is extremely important in the maintenance and preservation of their culture, language, traditions, and traditional knowledge to advance to economic independence and to a successful future. A participant from a study conducted by Visser and Gerharz (2016) on Chakma students who were studying at universities in Dhaka, says:

Education is all we got left; education is how we can make a difference now. If every family has one person going to university, that person can reason critically, and he can make sure, see, that what is happening is not good. He can make sure that the generation after him will go to school and is not forced into exploitation by the army, the settlers. An educated mind is an independent, free mind. (p. 377)

This indeed echoes how most Chakmas view the importance of education, as it empowers people to develop personally and become politically active, which is not always in the interests of rulers and people in power. In a survey in 2011 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2013) it was reported that only 11% of Chakmas were illiterate. Although Chakmas have suffered several human rights violations, including ethnocide (B. Chakma, 2010) and genocide (R. Chowdhury, 2015), they have continued to be persistent with education.

M. S. Chowdhury (2010), who belongs to the Marma Indigenous community in the CHT, sees the Chakma as an example for his own community. He believes education for the Chakma has become a tool for community empowerment, social development, and overall Chakma empowerment. The notion that education leads to empowerment is a well-established concept (Sundaram, Sekar, &

Subburaj, 2014), but there is still a need to learn much about whether the marginalised subalterns like Chakmas truly feel empowered because of their voiceless positions in society. As the core of the word indicates, empowerment is power (Kabeer, 1999; Karlberg, 2005; Sen, 1994, 1997). Empowerment is used as a synonym for enabling or enable and motivate (Drydyk, 2013), active decision-making, developing awareness of one's marginalised position in the society (Rolls & Chamberlaine, 2004). Another aspect of education for the minorities is, according to Gutiérrez (1995), psychological empowerment, which is the 'process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power that allows people to take action to improve their life situations' (p. 229).

Lee (1998), in her study on 32 ethnic minority students in China, suggests that educational attainment helps minority students empower themselves through individual mobility and empower their ethnic communities collectively through improvement in access and quality of education in the minority areas. Lee also shows that minority students exhibit a strong ethnic identity, sense of obligation, and responsibility to their families, villages, and ethnic communities, therefore contributing more towards community or collective empowerment. It is, therefore, imperative for the Chakma to stay focused on education if they want the Bangladesh government to listen to their demand for Indigenous recognition.

## 2.5 Chakma and Immigration

In this section, I discuss how Chakmas migrated from the CHT to bigger cities, such as Dhaka, Chittagong, and other cities, to pursue higher education and eventually left Bangladesh searching for a better and secure life.

In recent decades, the Chakmas from the CHT have experienced increased social and spatial mobility, aspiring for upward social mobility for a better future and resisting the dominant nationalistic imaginary of a homogenous Bangladeshi society (Visser & Gerharz, 2016). Migration has indeed become an increasingly visible global phenomenon. People migrate either by choice or by force, for many reasons, ranging from security, demography, and human rights to poverty and climate change, or sometimes merely for a sense of adventure. Lee (1966) believes migration can be defined as a permanent or semi-permanent move of residence. There is, however, a common reason for migration, that is, to seek a better life, which could be temporary, permanent, seasonal, or recurrent. It can happen in one generation or continue over several generations, and it might be national or international (Bhugra, 2004).

Lee (1966) believes there are two main factors why people migrate: push and pull factors. Push factors are the undesirable features of the place in which a person lives that encourage them to leave. Push factors might include inadequate medical care, poor housing, especially in the rural areas in

developing countries. In contrast to push factors which might also include natural disasters, lack of political or religious freedoms, fear of persecution, or war, are factors that attract a person to another area. These are pull factors, such as better employment opportunities, better living conditions, political and religious freedom, and higher levels of security.

Despite having a relatively higher literacy rate, it appears that the Chakma still do not feel secure in their own land. Processes of militarisation, discrimination, social oppression, and marginalisation have never stopped in the CHT, resulting in the growing number of people, including high achieving students, leaving the CHT to bigger cities (such as Dhaka and Chittagong), and eventually leaving Bangladesh. The following section addresses some aspects of why many students leave the CHT for better education.

As discussed above, one of the basic purposes of education is to attain a good life or enrich the quality of life. However, state and dominant groups can also use formal education as an instrument to impose their preferred ideologies to exercise hegemonic control, gain acceptance and support from citizens or control them if there are any discrepancies in opinions (Swain, 2005). The Bangladeshi Government has been imposing its ideology on its people by every means, exerting power over the Indigenous Peoples. To escape the vulnerable situation in the CHT, Chakmas are now migrating towards metropolitan, developed cities. Consequently, the number of Chakma people who have become residents of urban areas outside of the CHT is increasing drastically while at the same time creating diasporic communities in major cities within Bangladesh.

#### 2.5.1 Migration to Urban Cities *for* Education

If I stayed in Rangamati, I would not learn enough, but I would also not have connections to people who matter outside the CHT. And we will always be dominated by the Bengalis there, and they keep us small (Visser & Gerharz, 2016, p. 19).

This quote from a study voice of a participant from Visser and Gerharz's (2016) study on the Chakma university students in Dhaka explains why many young people are moving out of the CHT to pursue higher education for a better future, make connections with people in power (Bengalis), and fight against feeling small. Indeed, the CHT has observed a significant increase in the number of students' social and spatial mobility in recent decades. The reason behind this mobility lies in aspiring to higher education for a better future. Students from the three districts generally complete the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) in local high schools. After this, many from considerably affluent families - such as myself - are sent to study HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) to Dhaka (the capital) or Chittagong (the second biggest city), the two most favoured cities, in the hope that they will continue studying in one of the prestigious public Universities such as Dhaka University, Chittagong University, or BUET

(Bangladesh University of Business and Technology) and finally will hold a well-paid job. Others from humble families stay until they finish HSC and later on try to enrol at a university.

Visser and Gerharz (2016) write that the primary reason for the Chakma students coming to Dhaka is education, and they make up around 70% of the total Indigenous students studying in Dhaka. The main aim is to access good universities, aspire for upward social mobility, and make connections with the broader Bangladeshi society. These Chakma students believe they must do this if they want to be successful in the future (Visser & Gerharz, 2016). Badiuzzaman and Murshed (2014) have shown that compared to the past, many more parents from the CHT are sending their children to Dhaka because of experiencing land dispossession, fear of eviction, and experiencing political violence, which is committed by the Bengali settlers and the army. Parents see education as the means to enabling one to escape the conflict area and find security in bigger cities (Badiuzzaman & Murshed, 2014). Visser and Gerharz (2016) also write that for these Chakma students, being Indigenous becomes an asset to create a sense of belonging in metropolitan Dhaka as they navigate through discriminatory experiences. Indigeneity provides them a common ground to participate in political activism and protest against the Bangladeshi government's decisions on certain Indigenous Peoples-related issues organised by the Adivasi forum, a students' organisation. A recent protest against building a five-star hotel on the Mro Indigenous community's land in Bandarban is such an example (*Appendix IX*).

The capital city Dhaka has always been the centre of business, cultural and political movements and the central hub of education. Both symbolically and materially, Dhaka represents progressiveness, having a better lifestyle offering access to many amenities, including huge shopping malls, a yearly book festival in February, and a modern lifestyle. Graduates holding a degree from Dhaka University or any other university from Dhaka are given preference when they apply for employment. Recently though, it appears Chakma students are not limiting themselves to these two cities; they are travelling further for higher studies, even going to Rajshahi, or Dinajpur further north, which were once considered not worth travelling to because of the sheer distance and also because these cities were not considered as developed and therefore not worth visiting. One of my nieces is studying Electrical and Electronics Engineering in Faridpur, and it takes her almost two days to get there, an example of how far young Chakma men and women are willing to travel for higher education.

Entering a university is hugely challenging for most students, even more so for Indigenous students, especially those coming from smaller towns and outside metropolitan areas. Considering the vast number of students, for example, in 2020, a total of 1,145,329 completed the HSC examination (Alamgir, 2021), only a handful of them pass the highly competitive entry test for a well-reputed university. The rest seek enrolment in less reputed universities and would still continue towards a



Master's degree. Like many third-world countries, without a Master's degree, it is almost impossible to get hold of the *shonar horin* golden deer, a metaphor used to emphasise the degree of difficulty in securing employment in Bangladesh, either in public or private sectors in Bangladesh.

Visser and Gerharz (2016), in their article on 70 young Chakma students who were studying at several universities in Dhaka, reveal the number of students moving to Dhaka is increasing every year. In the 1980s, there were only a few hundred Chakma students (Visser & Gerharz, 2016); in 2016, the number rose to more than 10,000, although they could not find the exact number and suspect the actual number is higher. The reasons for this move are, firstly, far-reaching quotas for students, which came about as a result of Clause D10 in the Peace Accord in 1997 (see Section 1.2.2) requiring the Bangladesh government to maintain a quota system for 'tribals' in educational institutions and government services. Secondly, because of the much-improved communication infrastructure, with frequent and competitive bus services and flights from the hill districts to Dhaka. Thirdly, the lack of higher educational opportunities in CHT has led more and more Chakma youths to migrate towards Dhaka, and parents do not hesitate to invest money in children's education. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the CHT, funded by aid organisations from the US, Australia, and Europe, which have created many employment opportunities for the local people, resulting in more middle- or higher-class families among Chakmas.

However, not only do students from middle- or higher-class families go to Dhaka, students from less financially solvent families also pursue higher studies in the capital. My conversations with the local people and my relatives reveal that these families often take loans from the banks, from affluent relatives, or sell the only land they own. Sometimes three or four families rent a house in considerably inexpensive, lower-middle-class neighbourhoods within daily commuting distance so that they can share the rent and bills. They send rice and vegetables, local food, and even cooked meat, fish, and dried fish so that children can concentrate on their studies without worrying about these 'trivial' aspects of life. Another recent change that I have personally observed in many cases is that young students try to find a part-time job while studying. However, this is possible only if they have influential friends, such as a friend's father who has the power to employ a student without experience or a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. Although this is not yet a widespread practice, young students are becoming more aware of this opportunity. All of the above reasons show that Chakma people, hence the Chakma parents, take education very seriously, and the statistics prove the high literacy rate among Chakmas with over 71% (Rashiduzzaman, 1998).

The fortunate ones who successfully complete university and achieve Master's degrees with high grades would often try to secure a scholarship to leave the country. Compared to the Bengalis, almost no Chakma family can afford to send their children abroad for a higher degree. Thus, they have to rely on academic excellence for a scholarship. Like for many, America has always been a dreamland for a better future, and when the country introduced the Diversity Visa (DV) in the 1990s, many Chakma people tried their luck. Some obtained visas and moved to the USA permanently. Australia used to be considered only as a faraway land with unique flora and fauna and one that is famous for kangaroos. Not many Chakma wanted to come to Australia; however, since Australia started providing AusAID scholarships in the late 1990s to both Bengalis and ethnic minorities, interest in obtaining scholarships became widely popular.

AusAID scholarships (see Section 1.3.6) have contributed enormously in achieving the possibility of immigration for the Chakmas either to Australia. Without the scholarship for many Chakmas, including myself, it would not have been possible to come to Australia and access tertiary studies in Australia. Coming to study in Australia not only gave them an international degree from an English-speaking country but also opened doors for knowledge about other cultures, gave exposure to a better educational system, and above all, meant feeling free and secure, experiencing freedom in its more genuine sense for the first time, especially for the women. They could blend in with the other Asians without feeling self-conscious about their physical appearance. Feeling secure was the main reason for them to return to Australia after fulfilling the condition that they had to stay a minimum of two years in Bangladesh. All AusAID scholars have to return home to serve the country with the knowledge and skills they gained in Australia depending on the subject areas they studied. However, studies show that the AusAID returnees often find it challenging to adjust to their home country's environment.

A survey conducted by Nugroho and Lietz (2011) on AusAID scholar returnees in various countries, such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, China, and Cambodia, shows that upon returning with an Australian degree, most scholars had better opportunities in the employment market and were promoted sooner than their colleagues. For returned Chakma AusAID scholars, the trend remained similar. It was particularly evident that they secured employment in international, non-government organisations with higher salaries than those who studied at universities in Bangladesh. The participants in this study worked in various sectors ranging from the International banking sector to educational institutions.

Studies have shown that being exposed to a better and more egalitarian society like Australia often makes it hard for returning scholars to adjust to their personal circumstances and engage in professional identity negotiation (Phan, 2017, 2011) for two reasons. Firstly, they attempt to figure

out the new sociocultural context along with their values in the act of adapting to the new social system, which has changed since they had left for Australia. Secondly, when overseas students return to their home countries as scholars, they do not return empty-handed but with new values, knowledge and competencies. It is important to remember that AusAID scholarships are given to developing countries only, and are seen as help needed from developed countries. Zweig, Changgui and Rosen (2004) believe it is because these individuals now 'possess new ideas, technologies, and information that abets globalisation and makes them more valuable to these societies' (p. 735); such has been the case for the Chakma AusAID returnees.

Many researchers, such as Barnawi and Phan (2015), observed that overseas scholars largely return home in the hope of possessing different sorts of privileges that are not granted to those holding local qualifications. The fact that they had an engagement with local and international individuals both in the academic and socio-cultural spheres of the Western institutions/universities, means returnees are highly likely to develop trans-nationalised connections, competencies, and identities. According to Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), on return these scholars are expected to continue to contribute to their capacity and functioning in employment and society at home. Similarly, I myself experienced some challenges after returning to Bangladesh, such as adapting to an unordered environment, people not respecting others' privacy, hence, being too nosy or a lack of system in the society. I realised I was constantly comparing life here and there, experiencing a sense of being Chakma/Bangladeshi but at the same time belonging to a wider global community. I perceived myself to be more liberal, more informed about my own self, and more aware of what is happening in the world, but also more appreciative of Chakma culture compared to those without overseas exposure.

These above-mentioned changes show that the AusAID returnees experience cultural and personal changes, such as achieving individuality, which can be tricky in Chakma society as one needs to respect and listen to the *murubbis*, the elderly in the community, and one is discouraged from raising one's voice or questioning *murubbis'* decisions even if they are wrong. I also felt more confident when I started working in an international organisation because I was fluent in English and had an Australian degree. In Bangladesh, the English language plays a very important role in finding better employment. All in all, studying for a Bachelor's or a Master's degree in Australia brought enormous benefits to the AusAID scholars.

This sense of feeling of changes inside and openness is consistent with some other research done in other countries. For example, research in China by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) and by Barnawi and Phan (2015) in Saudi Arabia supports the understanding that students who study abroad go through changes in personality, world views, perceptions and identity formation. However, despite feeling

different, it appears that most Chakmas in Melbourne still did not want to leave Bangladesh, the only reason they decided to immigrate was for a securer life, especially when they became parents, therefore, opting for immigration to Australia, as they had already been here and were familiar with the 'Aussie' culture and society. Australian immigration policy recognised their previous Australian degrees to apply as skilled immigrants to pursue a secure life in a country where they do not have to live in fear, therefore, they immigrated to Australia permanently. These immigrants have subsequently sponsored their relatives, encouraged others to seek domicile in Australia, creating a *Chakma-Jumma* diasporic community, which is discussed in more detail in the next section. It is this community that is the focus of this thesis.

### 2.5.2 Migration to Australia *through* Education

In 2010, it was estimated that the number of international immigrants worldwide was approximately 214 million, and it is projected that if this trend continues, by 2050, the immigrant population will reach 405 million (International Organisation for Migration, 2010). Countries like Australia encourage migration through government policies that promote international aid, educational scholarships, and investments in other nations. There is a strong relationship between education and migration in Australia because most immigrate as skilled migrants, reflecting their level of education. In fact, in many cases, migration takes place for higher education as a preliminary step to become eligible as an immigrant later on (R. Chowdhury & Ha, 2014). It will be seen in Chapter 4 that such is the case in Australia for many migrants, particularly for the Chakmas from Bangladesh.

According to the latest census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), there are approximately 41,000 Bangladeshis living in Australia. A recent report by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2016) revealed that Bangladesh was one of the top ten source countries for the General Skilled Migration (GSM) program from 2006 to 2011. Within this, the Chakmas are also included. The growth rate for Bangladeshi immigrants since the early 1990s, the time the number of immigrants from Bangladesh drastically increased, has been 18.5% per year, which makes Bangladeshis one of the fastest growing communities in Australia. The major ancestry reported by Bangladeshi immigrants was Bangladeshi, and the main languages spoken by Bangladeshi immigrants were Bengali and English. It is important to point out other ethnolinguistic groups like Chakma are generally absent in the final results of the census. Therefore, it was challenging to identify the Chakmas separately among the Bangladeshi immigrants; due to the small number and close connections, we, the Chakma community, anecdotally know that there were just over 100 Chakmas in Melbourne during the time this thesis was written.

Since the complete abolition of the White Australian Policy in the early 1970s, there has been a dominant trend of immigration from Asian countries to Australia; eight out of the top 10 source countries are from Asia for GSM, and Bangladesh in recent decades, along with Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, has emerged as a new source country next to India, the dominant South Asian source country. The immigration system in Australia, similar to those of many other developed Western countries such as North America, Europe, and broadly Oceania, has three major components: skilled migration, humanitarian concern, and family reunion (Piper, 2009). However, in recent decades the immigration programme has been dominated by the skilled stream as opposed to the humanitarian and family streams. In comparison with immigration in other countries, for example, in the USA and Western European countries, Bangladeshi immigrants formed both skilled and unskilled immigrants (Siddiqui, 2003).

Furthermore, Siddiqui (2003) reveals that the migration of Bangladeshi women is largely seen as associational - women following their husbands. The study on the Chakmas in New York by Gerharz and Land (2018) reveals similar associational migration for the Chakma women, who had joined their partners after marriage. The other study by K. Chakma and Hill (2016) shows a similar trend. The French-Chakma men would go to find a bride in the CHT, and wives would either accompany their husbands to France or join them later on.

However, it appears that Chakmas in Australia, both males and females, have immigrated to Australia solely as skilled migrants, utilising their educational achievements. Therefore, the nature of immigration in Australia for this group of Chakma people is different from immigrants to other countries, particularly, in that in most cases women have been the primary applicants for immigration in Australia. This could be seen as an example of empowerment, particularly for women, by taking education seriously and taking advantage of the opportunity AusAID scholarships provided them amidst the patriarchal practices in Chakma society and the broader Bangladeshi society.

Like other people seeking domicile in other countries, first-generation migrants encounter unique challenges and obstacles and often have lower financial freedom and stability. Degrees obtained in home countries are often not recognised, and they do not have local work experience. As a result, first-generation migrants go through several difficulties, including financial, emotional, and social difficulties. The adaptation process involves a chain of events that are influenced by social and personal factors over time (Berry, 2006). The integration process into a new society generally requires a significant period of time and considerable effort and is influenced by a host of social, cultural, and individual factors (Berry, 2006)

Australia has been described as a land of skilled immigration, and the impact of immigrant cultures is apparent in many aspects of contemporary Australian life. Immigrants are continually challenged to find an effective strategy for successful integration into society. In the next section, I first discuss how the Chakma construct a diasporic identity followed by the strategies they use to maintain Chakma identity and culture.

#### 2.5.2.1 Constructing a Diasporic Chakma Community

This section discusses diaspora and the formation of the Chakma-*Jumma* diasporic community in Melbourne. In the past, the diaspora was considered a catastrophic phenomenon – the traumatic dispersal of victimised groups from an original homeland, specifically with the violent and victimised dispersal of the Jewish people in exile from their Holy Land (Safran, 2005). However, the usage of the term has extended and applied to many. For example, in the 1980s, the term was used to describe all groups that migrated to a different country, including expatriates, immigrants, and minorities. Conceptually the term itself has gone through revisions, and common features of diasporas have been discussed by many scholars, for example, R. Cohen (2008) and Safran (2005). Defining diaspora is, therefore, often complex as connotative meanings have expanded.

Despite the ubiquity of documentaries, social media presence, and YouTube videos, scholarly and empirical research on the Chakma diaspora has been scarce to date. Gerharz and Land in 2017 conducted an ethnographic study on 50 Chakma people living in New York, which showed that Chakmas in New York live in Chakma-*Jumma* diaspora enacting a *Jumma* community in order to signify belonging by displaying cultural symbols and other visible forms of expression to demonstrate their commonality.

Another case study conducted by K. Chakma and Hill (2016) on 72 *Jumma* men (66 Chakma) who were adopted by French families at the age of 6 to 15 and are now adults. The study reveals they keep regular contact with CHT and visit when possible. These 72 children previously had lived in a Buddhist orphanage in Rangamati. In the middle of the conflicts that often took place between 1979 and 1997 in the region (see Section 1.3.5), the children and monks were forced to flee to India when their orphanage was burnt, and later, they were adopted by French families. These once-traumatised children retained their Chakma and *Jumma* identities along with a French identity given by their adoptive families. They speak Chakma, and many of them went back to CHT to find a Chakma wife (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016). Every year they come together to celebrate *Bizu*, hoping to retain their Chakma culture, identity, and tradition so that the next generation does not forget their roots (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016).

The other available empirical, ethnographic research on Chakmas in India done by A. Chakma (2015) and Redclift (2015) focused mainly on the unsettling political aspects and demands for returning to Bangladesh. Although the last two studies mentioned above have not concentrated on diaspora, it is evident that most Chakma refugees in India still consider returning to their homeland. The Chakma in India, France, New York, or presumably any other parts of the world all share similar connectivity to the CHT through social networks despite early out-migration (Gerharz & Land, 2018) and prolonged absence from their birthplaces. *Jummas* in New York maintain close relationships not only with their relatives but also *Jummas* in other migration destinations. Gerharz and Land (2018) argue that individual migrants maintain these transnational networks predominantly through social media but also through rare personal visits.

Diaspora and migration are often inseparable, and according to Shuval (2000), diasporic migration is likely to increase considerably in the twenty-first century. S. Guo (2013) explains, 'migration is a topic of great and enduring interest because almost every country is involved in this process as a source, transit or destination country, or indeed all three simultaneously' (p. 1). People leave their homelands for diverse reasons, and often this movement results in different experiences with transition and resettlement (Alfred, 2015). Some groups are pushed from their homelands because of war, political, civil unrest, or sometimes perceived threats to their life, while others come voluntarily in search of better economic and educational opportunities. Alfred (2015) argues that globalisation and the materialism of industrialised nations in the West motivate people to immigrate to other countries, especially from developing nations like Bangladesh. For this study, I use one of the key points in considering Chakmas a diasporic community, which is group consciousness or keeping a collective, often idealised memory about their original homeland (R. Cohen, 2008).

In the contemporary context, with the acceleration of international mobility, the diaspora then has been often understood in a broader sense to refer largely to a group of the expatriate population who are living outside their home countries permanently but usually still keep regular contacts with their countries of origin. Chakmas in Melbourne, I argue, fall into the category of a diasporic community as they see their ethnicity as a significant bond and keep active contact with CHT in several platforms: through socially and religiously active groups such as the *Jumma* Australian Council, or through interaction in social media interfaces such as CHT Jummaland, CHT Voice, CHT Views or through the group of the Bangladesh Buddhist Society (BBS). These *Jummas* (Chakma, Marma, Tripura, and Kheyang, and so on) in Australia in different cities and states keep a strong connection with each other and a collective memory of the CHT after they immigrate, often helping each other financially and with finding employment. Examples of these are discussed in chapter 4.

I argue that a complex combination of both push and pull factors (Berry, 1997) have contributed to the Chakma–*Jumma* diaspora in many parts of the world, such as in the US, Canada, France, and Australia, where they go in search of a better life or to escape from a situation defined largely by political unrest, deprivation, and exclusion (B. Chakma, 2010; A. Chakma, 2015; van Shendel, 2012). Due to unsettling political reasons, many Chakmas are trying to leave the country to resettle in other countries, their first preference primarily being first-world developed Western countries as they are thought to offer security in life (Gerharz, 2015). While the politically unstable situation is pushing Chakmas to leave CHT, the attraction of the highly secure, modernised and developed lifestyle that Australia offers plays a significant role for them to choose Melbourne as a destination for domicile.

Anecdotal evidence shows there are a few ways for the Chakmas to stay connected with each other as a community, since there are only just over 100 of them in Melbourne. Firstly, it appears their origin (all from the CHT), shared culture, common history, and personal experiences help them build a much stronger sense of the Chakma community. At the same time, they also differentiate themselves from the Bangladeshi Bengali immigrants. In fact, a commonly shared story in the Chakma community, which I have experienced myself, is not being recognised as Bangladeshi (because of our Asian appearance) in public places such as in public transport or at shopping centres. This common story gives the Chakma a stronger sense of Chakma community and therefore, and not being Bangladeshi as such. It can be argued that since political tensions, experiencing discrimination, and power plays between the Bengalis and the communities do not generally exist in Melbourne, Chakmas can use their freedom and safety in a strategic way to distance themselves from the Bengalis even in diaspora. This type of community building is also evident in Gerharz and Land's (2018) study on Chakmas in the US, where Chakmas use the *Jumma* umbrella to unify themselves and also achieve this through Buddhism, clothing, and celebrations. Data from this study strongly affirms the prevalence of such practices, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Secondly, the transnational communal space connecting Chakma is constituted by the people's enduring longing to be connected with their homeland. It is common to organise social gatherings if a family member of a fellow *Jumma* is visiting or when raising money for victims of natural disasters or a political conflict (Gerharz & Land, 2018). In this way, the Chakma in Melbourne enact platforms to keep connected as a community that resembles the CHT. In addition, organising communal gatherings on certain occasions, such as when someone buys a property, Chakmas come together to bless the house so that they can live happily. Not only that, but it is also common for Melbournian Chakmas to buy houses in the same suburb so that they can live closer, and therefore, create enclaves; just as one participant in Gerharz and Land's study (2018) summarises the *Jumma* diaspora enacting a community in a sentence, 'our wishes are to be together, to live together' (p. 3). Those Chakmas in New York



similarly stay as a community through regular meetings and personal visits. Both Chakmas in New York (Gerharz & Land, 2018), in France (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016), and in Melbourne seem to consider these social practices and gatherings also as efforts to ensure that a *Jumma* identity is passed onto children born in all these three countries.

However, none of the above studies have focused specifically on the role education has played in the Chakmas' migration to other countries and how they maintain *Chakmaness* in diaspora. Nor have they touched on the importance of the multiple identities they carry as immigrants in other countries, and above all how they maintain and preserve their cultural identity. This study aimed to fill this gap by investigating the diasporic identity/identities Chakma people carry, shift among and negotiate in Melbourne and how they maintain their Chakma identity and culture through educational affordances.

#### 2.5.2.2 Remaining Chakma in Diaspora

Identity, like diaspora, is made of cultural, social, or biological commonalities, which may, more specifically, involve aspects that are religious, linguistic, symbolic, or genetic in character (Story & Walker, 2015). In a diasporic context, identity is often created through connection with a distant place or space curated differently at home and abroad, over time leading to expressions of belonging (Story & Walker, 2015).

This section discusses how the Chakma in diaspora maintain their strong Chakma identity and how they construct, negotiate, shift and waver between their past Bangladeshi nationality and current Australian identity in Melbourne, and how they maintain their Chakmaness. The term identity is a complex concept as it includes cultural, social, or biological commonalities, or they may be religious, linguistic, symbolic, or genetic in character (Story & Walker, 2015). However, the general concept of identity means who we are and how we make sense of ourselves. We construct our own identities through experiences, emotions, connections, and rejections, all the things that we live, face, or experience in our lives.

According to Anderson (2013), we construct identity in two ways: first, who we see ourselves as being, and second, how we see ourselves as differing from other people. I am me, and I am not them. Therefore identity construction is a process of negotiation by which Anderson (2013) refers to the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept (p. 57). Hall (1996) argues that identity is a combination of self-identification and the perceptions of others and is always based on power and exclusion, and difference, which I discussed in Section 2.2 in this chapter. Hall (1997) stresses that identities are always fragmented, multiply constructed, and intersect in a constantly changing, sometimes conflicting manner. Similarly, diasporic identity, according to Hall (1997), is complex and

formed by everyday experiences, backgrounds, and defined through difference, meaning it is hybrid and relational. Hall (1997) writes about his own Caribbean/Jamaican, black, and British identities and the struggles to understand and reconcile them. The following three sections, discuss how the Chakma in diaspora maintain their Chakmaness through culture, language and religion.

In this study, cultural identity, especially vis-à-vis national identity (Bangladeshi), is central to an understanding of how Chakmas struggle and strive to ascertain their various selves as they transition between spatiotemporal dimensions of power, structure, and agency, and in doing so negotiate, appropriate, reconstruct and reappropriate selves that were often inaccessible to them. In Bangladesh, there is friction between the quintessential cultural identity of being a Chakma and the politically imposed identity of being a Bangladeshi. Despite ongoing demands, the Bangladeshi government has categorically denied the communities the right to be officially called Indigenous or Adivasi. In fact, in 2010, the government issued a memo ordering that *Upo-jatis* not be referred to as Adivasis or Indigenous in any government communication or document (Mohaieman, 2010). It is for this reason in particular that a consideration of their Chakmaness, language and culture protection and their conceptualisation of identity is essential in understanding how the Chakma in Melbourne understand and enact their various selves over a period of time and across transnational spaces.

#### 2.5.2.3 Maintaining Chakma Culture and Language in Diaspora

Within identity studies, for this study, identity is an area of significant contestation, both at the scholarly and the socio-political levels. State-based machineries (such as government policies, funding bodies, and higher education institutes) often decide who a person is by looking at subjective assumptions and outdated stereotypes. These understandings often change over time with changes in political discourses, scholarly rhetoric, and policy priorities. However, my interactions with the Chakmas in Melbourne and how they share political ideologies, participate in discussions in recognition-related issues, and identity/politics discussions on several online platforms have made me believe that identity is considered a critical aspect of their Chakmaness in Melbourne.

Identity is also closely connected with two key and inseparable components – culture and language. It is a language that allows individuals to store, recover, structure, and communicate information and experience using symbols and codes within a group or society. Culture refers to the language, beliefs, values, norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills, and all other things that people learn that make up the way of life of any society (Story & Walker, 2015). Culture is passed on from one generation to the next through the process of socialisation. Cultural identity is the feeling of identity of a group of a culture or of an individual as far as they are influenced by their belonging to a group or culture.

Culture is something that is learnt over time, something shared by members of the same cultural group, and that can impact behaviour and how the experience may be understood and managed within a specific cultural/ethnic group. Cultural knowledge is generally transmitted from one generation to the next by elders, which is not necessarily a deliberate act. As Schonpflug (2008) believes, cultural transmission happens over time and eventually becomes a part of who people are and the way they may think about things, and transmission of knowledge generally occurs in the areas of values, skills, behaviour, and knowledge. Religion and religious practices are also a part of the culture that may be transmitted.

Migration and settlement in a new country where one faces unfamiliar challenges is a life-altering experience for immigrants. Learning to navigate a new government, geographic location, and language, immigrants often experience a culture different from their own and seek out the diasporic community as the community provides a sense of comfort because of shared characteristics and commitment to maintaining the customs and traditions of the homeland (R. Cohen, 2008). In the resettling process for immigrants, cultural identity plays a key role, and the cultural differences between the diasporic and host communities often create a struggle for the immigrants (Liu, 2015). Liu (2015) argues that in many countries, immigrants now want to acculturate and at the same time preserve their culture like a salad bowl, where all the ingredients (cultural aspects) will be together but will not dissolve or become unrecognisable (assimilate).

Hall (1990) offers two ways of thinking about cultural identity: first, cultural identity as a reflection of the cultural codes and history shared by people with the same ancestry, which means immigrants from the same region have a shared culture which then informs their cultural identity. The second view of his cultural identity is as critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we are or rather since *history* has intervened what we have become' (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Therefore, Identity is a process impacted by historical intervention rather than simply an unchanging product, and identity construction is a process of negotiation. Chakmas in Melbourne, have to negotiate and take action (Hall, 1990) across time and space in their transnational identity (re)construction and social behaviours concerning their fellow Bengali citizens in Melbourne and within the broader Australian multiple cultures and communities.

Studies on various migrant groups unanimously report that migrant groups in diaspora experience multiple layers of power (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) and translocally construct their identities (Ghosh & Wang, 2003). The migrants in countries like Australia can juxtapose sociocultural categories of homelands and host countries because migration policies allow – at least in espoused discourses - for multiculturalism and multilingualism and dynamically craft unique social identities which are hybrid

and translocal (Duff, 2015; Richards, 2008). From a diasporic point of view, the migration process is not a linear process of change requiring relinquishing pre-immigration social experiences and cultural repertoires. Migrants, rather, integrate into the sociocultural contexts of the receiving countries. Berry (1997) defined the term integrate in conceptualising a new frame for the acculturation of migrant communities. He believes integration is a strategy that migrants use to place value on and maintain their home cultural identity while participating in the largest social networks to adopt new social identities. Several studies on migrant groups (see, for example, Jamarani, 2012; Kaya, 2009; McAuliffe, 2008) show that diaspora migrants reconstruct their ethnic identity based on the socio-cultural and political structures of the host countries. However, in this process, they do not give up their pre-migration categories of perception and action, pre-immigration social experiences, and social identities while they reterritorialise in the host countries.

For the first generation Bangladeshi Chakmas in Australia, the adult immigrants had already built their cultural identity in the socio-political context of the CHT and in Bangladesh before migration. In the process of constructing their Bangladeshi national identities, the adult Chakma migrants had already witnessed or experienced their dominant social position in the CHT. In reconstructing their transnational identities in Australia, the degree to which Bangladeshi Chakma immigrants modify their ethnic identities, including their tension with Bangladeshi Bengalis, and/or adapt themselves to the Australian socio-cultural context is equivocal in the literature. Therefore, this study wanted to shed light on the process or the stories through which Chakmas keep their Chakmaness across time and space, which I report in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 later in the thesis.

Due to ongoing socio-political oppression and militarisation over several decades (see Section 1.3), and in the face of a largely failed armed resistance, the Chakmas have started showing heightened awareness in preserving Chakma culture and traditions by learning the Chakma script and showing more Chakmaness, especially among the younger generation. Women now wear the traditional clothes, *Pinon hadi*, at almost every opportunity, not just in the CHT. The number of traditional clothes shops has never been so prominently visible in all three CHT districts. There are also several Chakma clothes shops and restaurants serving authentic Chakma food in Dhaka and Chittagong, and as one of the restaurant owners, my friend, told me, 'if they want to kill us in the CHT, we will bring our culture to the plain land, we are here to survive, not die'. The *Bizu* celebration has become overwhelmingly big compared to a few decades ago.

These efforts constitute silent manifestations of and alternative ways of defying the conventions of the dominant society and are a surviving strategy for the minority groups. In essence, these are alternative/pacifist/nonviolent forms of protest for recognition and investments in the higher literacy

rate of the new generation of Chakmas. They are an excellent example of how alternative affordances and channels of protest have characterised the silent Chakma revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – diaspora is an extension of such silent protest.

Chakmas have been resisting Bengali cultural hegemony for many decades, and cultural self-assertion has been a continual theme (van Schendel, 2001) in the CHT. Evidence of this can be traced back to a series of periodicals, starting with *Gairika* in 1936, the first periodical of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It was published from the Chakma palace at Rangamati at the initiative of the Chakma Queen (later queen mother) Binita Roy. *Gairika* mainly published the contributions of local writers from different ethnic backgrounds in the CHT, and for the first time, a group of litterateurs grew at Rangamati, centring around the journal publishing articles on religion, philosophy, history, literature, society, and arts as well as travelogues, poems, short stories, and novels. *Gairika* also published poems, short stories, and articles in English, which directed themselves to both Bengali and non-Bengali audiences. The publications presented ‘regional *tribal* voices as legitimate and civilised, demanded that non-Bengali cultural expressions be taken seriously and asserted that Bengali contempt of such expressions was based on deep ignorance’ (Van Schendel, 2001, p. 120). The writers seemed to have shared a common concern that their own culture might be crushed by the dominance of Bengali culture, showing strong statements of cultural preservation.

In April 1996, a new type of journal came into existence with the first issue of *JumPada*, published by the *Jumma* Peoples Resource Centre in Australia (a Hill students’ network) in the Chakma language rather than in Bengali. The aim was to revive their own culture in their own written language, which most of them had yet to learn, as they had not had the opportunity to learn it earlier. On the *JumPada* homepage, it says, ‘we are printing *Jumma* scripts, and writing in our languages in order to protect and practice our scripts and promote our literature’ (*JumPada* Homepage), which clearly no longer wants to attract a Bengali audience; instead, it is directed towards a *Jumma* audience, not only in the CHT but in other parts of the world.

These two journals could be viewed as examples of how Jummas, particularly the Chakmas from the CHT have taken several initiatives to preserve their culture and language both in the region and particularly overseas. Cultural education and formal education undoubtedly played important roles in doing so as formal education made them more aware of their rights, the unfair treatments they have been receiving and most importantly, how to reach an international audience through literature.

This sense of cultural identity is carried strongly by many immigrants when they choose to call another country home, particularly in making sure that children speak the language at home. Studies conducted in the United States by Lao (2004) with 86 Chinese immigrant parents shows that parents

make special efforts by sending children to Sunday schools, creating opportunities to converse in Mandarin and not speaking in English at home. The parents believe there are numerous benefits for children who grow up bilingual or multilingual. Other studies, such as one on Korean immigrants (Park & Sarkar, 2007) and another on Tibetan immigrants by Choedon (2016), both in Canada, show similar beliefs in the value of maintaining their heritage Korean and Tibetan languages.

These beliefs about the importance of language maintenance in immigrants' families are evident not only in the United States and Canada, but also in Australia. For example, Cavallaro (2005) argues that maintaining minority languages (including Aboriginal and immigrants' languages) is important for six reasons: to maintain group integrity and group membership, to develop and maintain identity, to preserve cultural heritage, to address social humanitarian and economic implications, for preventing complete assimilation and for cognitive development and academic achievement (p. 564) - all of which create positive identity and self-image. Therefore, Cavallaro (2005) strongly believes that all languages that are spoken within a community should be maintained and preserved to create a cultural expansion, and most importantly, cognitive growth through the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual within the broader host country.

Similarly, Chakmas in New York and France, as mentioned multiple times in this chapter, strongly believe that speaking Chakma is extremely important for them and the future generations of diasporic Chakmas. It appears that Chakmas in Melbourne hold similar notions of Chakma language maintenance as I have noticed that in gatherings most parents converse only in Chakma with their children.

#### 2.5.2.4 Maintaining Buddhism in Diaspora

Finally, for Chakmas, it has been observed that Buddhism and religious rituals play a significant role in maintaining their identity both in the CHT and in diaspora in Melbourne. Chakmas, along with other Buddhists in the CHT and Chittagong district, had been practising a form of Buddhism blended with Tantric practices long before the Mughal and the British arrived in the region (N. K. Chakma, 2011). The practice continued until Theravada Buddhism was established after a reform movement in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (N. K. Chakma, 2011). However, Sattar (1983) argues that Chakmas' practice of Buddhism has been adopted from different Hindu pujas within their fold (p. 385). Many writers believe the future of the Buddhists in the CHT is in jeopardy due to the serious threats and pressures from the dominant Bangladeshi Muslim population (B. Chakma, 2010, 2018; Mohsin, 2013).

Converting the poor Jummas to Islam by luring them with immediate financial benefits and other facilities has become a threatening phenomenon since the 1980s when the migration of poor Bengali Muslims from the plains by rulers of military regime General Zia and General Ershad started (B.

Chakma, 2010). These poor Muslim migrants to the CHT are now believed to be the majority and continue occupying and grabbing local peoples' lands. As a consequence, people in the CHT have experienced a severe setback in the preservation and promotion of the ethnic cultures and Buddhist traditions which led to the permanent halt of a glorious tradition of holding centuries-old *Bouddha Melas* (Buddhist fairs) that were previously held on the occasion of important Buddhist festivals.

However, the Chakma Buddhists have been trying to fight back against the ongoing threats of Islamisation. Lately, Buddhism has taken once again centre stage (B. Chakma, 2018), which highlights a trend of cultural revivalism and a return to tradition due to the results of strategic measures taken by the Chakmas in the CHT to preserve their culture and identity. In my recent visit to my hometown Khagrachhari, I noticed a marked presence of religious practices in the CHT, both in social media and the increasing number of *keyangs* and frequent visits people make to these *keyangs*. It is nowadays common to see Buddhist religious songs being released on YouTube, Facebook, and in many other forms of social media.

Through the prevailing insecurity and obstacles to a peaceful and undisturbed life, particularly after the construction of the Kaptai Dam (see Section 1.3.1), two aspects became important in maintaining the Chakmas' identity – education (see Sections 1.3.6 and 2.5) and Buddhism (Visser & Gerharz, 2016). Together they resulted in the construction of a variety of educational facilities under the aegis of Buddhist institutions both in Dhaka and the CHT. In fact, the flourishing of Buddhism can be traced back to the formation of the *Parbattya Bouddha Sangha* (Hill Buddhist Association) in the 1960s, after the construction of the Dam. Since then, there has been 'an evident emphasis on religious practices within the Buddhist communities' (B. Chakma, 2018, p. 97). The rise of a venerable *Bhante* monk, *Bano Bhante* particularly was behind this strong surge of Buddhist followers from the early 1980s.

Buddhism is a way of thinking and being, rather than a set of habitual religious practices (Ma Rhea, 2012). *Bano Bhante* preached this way of thinking that gave a sense of security, something to hold onto during the political turmoil and frequent fights between the army and the *Shanti Bahini*. To the followers, he was a representative of peace, harmony, and way of life, which had led him to try to create a peaceful link between the army and the *Jumma* people (B. Chakma, 2018). Melbournian Chakmas are carrying on *Bano Bhante's adorsho* preaching.

It is not surprising to see the underlying connection between education and religion among the Chakmas as they considered the two very important tools to preserve their culture and identity against the systematic violation and discrimination, especially since the construction of the Dam. Gerharz and Land (2018), in their study on the diasporic Chakmas in New York, reveal that the majority of the Chakmas had immigrated through Buddhist connections to other Buddhist countries, for example,

Thailand, Sri Lanka, or Korea, where some participants of that study had been sponsored to study and eventually to be able to go to the USA. The study shows that the Chakmas in New York keep closer connections with other Buddhists (including non-Chakma) to feel safer and comfortable with a sense of commonality. Similarly, Chakma refugees in South Korea (K. Taylor, 2011) who fled political persecution in Bangladesh reveal choosing South Korea to live is because 'Korea is very similar to us in the case of religion as a historically Buddhist country and racially we are similar too' (n.p.). Chakmas in France (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016) on the other hand, visit *keyangs* for occasional socialisation purposes in order to keep themselves connected to Buddhism and to establish networks within the *Jumma* community and other Buddhists.

This study found that Chakmas in Melbourne too visit Buddhist temples, celebrate various religious ceremonies, such as *Buddha Purnima* (the birth of Buddha), *Kathina Civara Daana* (weaving new robes for the monks), and so on, usually with family or in groups and consider it as a significant aspect of their lives as Chakma in Melbourne. Rather than religious practices, they see these as social and cultural practices that are inseparable from their Chakma identities. I have also taken part in visiting *keyangs* on specific days/occasions with the Chakma community, such as on the first day of the year or *gojja pojja din* the first day of the Bengali New Year by offering food to the monks and prayers. Anecdotal evidence shows that Chakmas in Melbourne strongly believe family is where all types of education start, whether it is teaching religious rituals, cultural norms, or traditions. Schulz and Hammer (2003) argue that family operates as a social institution for community members, particularly for immigrants, and this helps them in the process of settlement in a new country. As mentioned above, family is considered extremely important for the Chakma as the family is associated with the concept of collective culture.

All these activities seem to be very important for the Chakma in Melbourne firstly, to keep themselves connected to the CHT, to back home, and secondly, to transfer social norms, cultural and religious practices to the next generations of Chakma. This will be discussed later in the thesis.

## 2.6 Theories of Relevance to this Study

There are many theories that deal with minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and subalterns that might or might not help to answer the research question for this study, which is, *What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?* To lay the groundwork for my inductive research design and to help me to answer the research question, I, therefore, engaged with several theories. I also started reading background literature about the Chakmas, other ethnic minorities, and Indigenous communities who have immigrated to other countries in search of a better future. I found that some immigrants stay deeply rooted in their home countries and protect their culture and identity, while others acculturate



or assimilate into the host societies. Both sides of the literature intrigued me into engaging deeper with several theories.

Knowing the political history of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Chakmas' situation, I was particularly interested in reading theories that discuss colonialism, postcolonialism, and Subalternism. In the existing literature about the Chakma, many writers theorise their argument around these concepts (B. Chakma, 2016, 2018; K. Chakma & Hill, 2016; Mohsin, 2010). I became deeply engrossed in Spivak's landmark article, *Can the subaltern speak?* To understand the Chakma's situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), I wanted to understand how Spivak (1988) explained the subalterns' positions, and how this might be relevant to the position of the Chakma in the society. Many ethnic minority communities (Aboriginals, Indigenous/Adivasis) have experienced extreme levels of annihilation through the advancement of colonisation. For instance, in Australia, Canada, the US, and South American countries, many people have lost their lands and were forced to leave their original habitat areas, forced to speak the colonisers' language, and embrace their education system. Similarly, Chakmas, too, have been denied access to study in their mother tongue, and their education has been mainly in Bengali. However, this is not to argue that only ethnic minorities, Indigenous/Adivasis are the only minorities, as there are minorities in all societies, such as religious minorities, visible minorities, the LGBTQI community, racial minorities, and so on.

It is no coincidence that most of these theorists represent Southern Theories and Southern Theorists, and I have gradually realised that Western, Eurocentric, and predominantly Anglophone theories have been considered to be inadequate in accounting for the complexities in the lives of minorities such as the Chakma.

I started reading Homi Bhabha's seminal work *The Location of Culture* (1994), his theoretical position on hybrid identity and third space, and Stuart Hall's *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1996), where Hall argues that cultural identity is not only a matter of being but of becoming and belonging as much as to the future as to the past. I also read John Berry's model of acculturation for immigrants (1997) extensively, along with Quijano's (2000) *Coloniality of Power*, Spivak's (1988) *Subaltern Theory*, and Kabeer's (1999) *Empowerment Theory*. In the following sections, I briefly describe the reasons behind my engagement with the theories mentioned above in no particular order (these are integrated later in Chapter 5).

Minorities are, according to Spivak (1988), spoken on behalf of, not because they cannot speak, but because their voicelessness is manifested as a lack of agency in the process of social and cultural representation. The Chakma have always been the other, the voiceless, which formulates their identity as different, and which also implies an asymmetry in power relations (Staszak, 2009).

Voicelessness manifests as exclusion from policymaking or participation in political and cultural life for the people, and in the long run, such voicelessness is punctuated with the lack of agency and self-representation. Therefore, they have failed in getting scholarly attention – an important point raised by postcolonial theorists, such as Spivak. Spivak used the word subaltern from what Gramsci (1978) called the subaltern class. Postcolonial researchers, including Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994), began to raise awareness about the impacts of colonisation in many countries. In particular, Spivak (1988) and Nandy (2000, 2009) have made significant contributions in their subaltern studies in India.

Quijano's (2000) concepts of colonality of power were also helpful to realise that the Chakmas and the other Indigenous minorities are not yet situated in the postcolonial state in Bangladesh. Quijano talks about social structures and describes the colonality of power in four interrelated domains: 1) control of the economy that includes land appropriation, exploitation, and control of natural resources; 2) control of authority, which includes institutions and army; 3) control of gender and sexuality concerning family and education and 4) control of subjectivity and knowledge that includes epistemology, education, and formation of subjectivity. He also implies that colonial power dismantles existing forms of social organisation and ways of life.

Applying this concept of colonality of power to the Chakma and the CHT context is useful for understanding contemporary imbalanced power dynamics that play a crucial role in the CHT and identifying the ways in which social power relations continue to be organised, constituted, and conditioned by centuries of Western colonial expansion. Historically, Muslim Pakistanis took over from the British colony, then in 1971, Bengali Muslims took over from the Pakistani Muslims (see Section 2.2). Seen this way, the independent and sovereign country of Bangladesh, as far as minorities are concerned, continues to be colonised and is being colonised by the Muslim Bengalis (Kabir & R. Chowdhury, 2021). Chakmas and the other minorities have never achieved the independence promised by a postcolonial state. Rather, the leaders only seem to have switched places or changed their positions through a political game of musical chairs.

Therefore, if we look at history through the lens of colonality rather than postcolonialism, that gives us a broader and more sensitive perspective of the power play in politics, and this allows me to analyse not only the Bengalis concerning Chakmas but also to consider other minorities with Chakmas and the impact of the colonality of power on diasporic Chakmas outside Bangladesh. Indeed, as Tripura (2010) writes, 'the real legacy of colonisation is that colonialist classificatory schemes continue to be meaningful to date, and perhaps more so than before. At least that is the case with the *Pahari*/Bengali dichotomy that we confront in the Hill Tracts today' (pp. 237-8).

Since the present study was conducted in Australia with the Chakma immigrants in diaspora, I believed hybridity could be used as a theoretical lens for understanding diversity, multiplicity, and conflicting perspectives of the participants' identities. To unravel these conflicts, one needs to act rather than react, as they create contradictions in existence preventing one from moving beyond binaries of the self and the other (Hoogvelt, 1997). Chakmas in Melbourne then are no longer pure Chakmas or pure Bangladeshis - they are a hybrid of Australian-Bangladeshi-Chakmas.

Hybridity refers to a mixture or amalgamation of two or more cultures or identities of an individual having access to two or more ethnic identities – someone like Bhabha, who was brought up as a Parsee in a predominantly Hindu culture and who then took an identity within a Western Anglophone culture. While historically, hybridity was viewed as a problematic and even an offensive term (Young, 1995), particularly in the colonial era, representing as it did mixed breeds of white and other races, hybridity in postcolonial discourse is 'celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the subsequent ability to negotiate the difference' (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 158).

According to Bhabha (1990), hybridity is, 'when a new situation or a new alliance formulates itself', and this 'may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them' (p. 124). In addition to this, hybridity creates or rather opens up a third space of resistance, negotiation, and articulation of new meanings, which signifies resistance to reductive reifying binaries, labels, and unitary identities. This space is fluid (Hall, 1996), shifting, liminal, as Bhabha calls it, and represents the in-betweenness where I believed Chakma immigrants face the challenges of their standard cultural practices. They reconstruct and negotiate in frequent social gatherings, cultural, religious celebrations, creating a third space, resulting in the enunciation of new meanings. Therefore, this third space suggests that identity and culture are complex but negotiable entities that eventually enable negotiation of inclusion rather than exclusion; it creates collaboration but also contestations of meanings (Bhabha, 1994).

According to Bhabha (1990), the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from where the third emerges; rather, hybridity is the third space that enables other positions to emerge. This third space 'displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority' (p. 211). Therefore, the third space suggests identity and culture are complex and negotiable entities that reject fixity and polarisation (Bhabha, 1994) as well as reductive binaries (such as Chakma/Bengali), which encourages multiplicity. I intended to critically explore the third space to celebrate difference and new ways of being (Kraidy, 2005).

I anticipated Chakma immigrants would be constructing their own hybrid identity in the third space of diaspora. In reference to this third space, Bhabha (1990, 1994) acknowledges that diasporic communities often feel they belong neither in the homeland nor in the host country but in an in-between space. When immigrants move from one culture to another, they have to learn to navigate between two or more cultures and find a balance between them in order to adapt to the society that they are part of and as a result of this, Bhabha (1994) claims that they develop hybrid identities: an in-between stage between cultures (p. 313). The third space can operate as a space of difference celebrated by challenging the binaristic notion of assimilation versus rejection that essentialises the Chakmas' experiences in relation to sameness, wholeness, and homogeneity (Bardhan, 2012: Bhabha, 1994, 1996).

In other words, as Chakmas reposition themselves in Melbourne, they live as sojourners, in the transition to being diasporic Australians as spatio-temporal identity transition, still very closely connected to the CHT. At the same time however, their nationality of Bangladeshi, and ethnic identity of Chakma make them a unique group of people exploring their third space hybridity. Hence, I believed the research question of this study could be answered through using this theoretical lens.

I also read Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) influential and oft-cited work *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, initially written for an Indigenous audience. Smith intended to help Indigenous researchers think through community-based research initiatives with Indigenous communities. She encourages Indigenous researchers to move away from conducting research through imperial eyes, which have oppressed Indigenous Peoples and suppressed Indigenous knowledge, to embrace the Indigenous paradigm. Smith demonstrates the inherently political nature of research that has been integrated with the systems of four major concepts framing Indigenous experiences of researching; imperial power, writing, history and theory, and the larger projects of modernity. These concepts serve to address colonisation's shared experience, the processes of attempted dehumanisation and fragmentation that resulted from it, and the ongoing struggle for self-determination.

I found it fascinating how Smith instructs her readers on the necessity of the action of doing, especially with the idea that this is transforming the Indigenous paradigm of theoretical imaginary into a politicised consciousness. I was particularly curious to explore the possibility of theoretical and methodological frameworks of Indigenous paradigms that could be applied in researching the experiences of the Chakma immigrants since they identify themselves as Indigenous. Smith's work seemed helpful because she presents an indigenous research agenda that identifies the stages through which indigenous communities are moving (through stages of survival, recovery,

development, and self-determination) and the conditions under which they navigate those spaces (through decolonisation, healing, transformation, and mobilisation).

To understand Chakma immigrants' settlement issues in Australia, I read Berry's (1997) bi-dimensional acculturation framework in depth. I saw it as an alternate theory to assimilation that is known as the acculturation theory, which was initially understood as the process by which immigrants adapt to their host society (Berry, 1997). Therefore, acculturation and immigrants' settlement processes are closely connected. Many scholars argue that successful settlement depends on the degree of acculturation (Dixon, Tse, Rossen & Sobrun-Maharaj, 2009) and that acculturation is a process that takes place over time.

Acculturation may also occur concurrently, not only on an individual level (psychological acculturation) but also on a collective or a group level (cultural acculturation) in both home and host countries (Berry, 1997). Cultural integration is defined as attitudes, behaviours, or strategies that individuals demonstrate to identify themselves with their heritage and host cultures. Quickly adapting to both, feeling comfortable with both, and having a command of both languages, they feel that they can live successfully in both cultures (Berry, 2005). The term is synonymous with biculturalism and designated in Berry's (2005) studies as simply integration.

Berry proposes four acculturation outcomes: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation, which, according to Kim (2007), constitute high and low dimensions of acculturation. In this model, integration occurs when individuals adhere to both home and host cultures and maintain both cultures in their final identity. Berry (1997) argues that 'integration can only be freely chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity' (p. 10). Assimilation occurs when the host culture is embraced, and the home culture is rejected. Separation happens when one maintains his/her heritage culture but avoids direct interaction with the host culture; while marginalisation occurs when one keeps their distance from both the home and host cultures. I wanted to see, given the fact that they are all highly educated, whether the Chakmas in Melbourne acculturate, assimilate or integrate with Australian society while maintaining and protecting their Chakma culture and identity.

Many researchers who have focused on the concepts of assimilation and acculturation have mainly studied a unidirectional system of influence with immigration and identity (Berry, 1997; Sonn, 2002). The main emphasis has been on how immigrants experience the host culture, hence, changing their immigrant identity, which required them to either adopt or reject their home and host culture (Berry, 1997). However, those who studied immigrants using hybridity theory argue that immigration might result in the emergence of a third identity, a product of integrating cultures and creating a distinct

culture from the cultures that originally formed their identity (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996). Scholars such as Bhabha (1994), Fanon (1952), and Said (1993) have examined how first-generation immigrants have defined and created their identities and how cultural colonisation might have been a factor in such identity formations. According to many researchers, hybridity theory helps explain immigrants' different spaces and literacies (Moje, 2004). Moje argues that the first space is people's home, community, and peer networks (informal discourses) that merge with the second space of the more formal discourses they encounter, such as school, church, or work. Facilitating various in-between sources of knowledge and discourses can be very helpful but at the same time limiting in the development of identities through associated literate, social, and cultural practices, which is also known as the third space theory (Moje, 2004).

Bhabha (1994) believes this third space is more mobile involving immigrants moving across spaces and identities; he suggests that the significance of the third space is in the process of tracing two original moments from which the third emerges, enabling new positions to emerge. Bhabha (1994) defines the third space as an in-between space, which involves various degrees of resistance, acculturation, and or assimilation synchronously through a fluid negotiation process where the third space is the core hybrid situation that requires calibration and constant adjustment in fluid movements between past and present. In this space, by encompassing past and present resources, immigrants shape the ultimate identity of such hybrid forms in fluidity (Bhabha, 1994), which Bhabha (1994) refers to as the creation of a third culture created by this constant interaction, or a new culture – with the mutually inclusive practices of two different cultures.

Cultural theorists such as Hall (1994) claim that we are living in an age of immense spatial upheaval, and the resulting modern nations are gradually written by people who live at the margin of a multicultural society, for example, women, members of the working class, and ethnic groups. Immigrants constantly yearn for a place and seek recognition of identity in society. When Hall (1994) talks about identity, he argues that identities are socially constructed, which involves a struggle over how meaning is fixed and defined. I considered Hall's (1994) idea of identity as fluid, flexible, and changing to understand the phenomena of the Chakma and their identity construction, culture maintenance, and how they negotiate between Chakma, Australian and Bangladeshi cultures. Hall (1999) argues that identity is not simply a binary between us and them and that there are two views of cultural identity. One view is what we have been doing over the years; not here, not now, rather that which is connected to the past, changes in governments, the rule of law, institutions such as the church, the aristocracy, and all of that which is the dynamic view of culture which Kramsch (1988) calls the diachronic view (see Figure 5.2). The other is to look at culture through the practices of the community as here and now, or the synchronic view. Therefore, cultural identity is influenced by both.

This study focuses on both of these aspects of the Chakma immigrants' identity construction. I believed Chakmas in Melbourne float between three identities: diasporic Australians, Bangladeshi nationals, and ethnic Chakmas. But within each of these, what does it mean to be a Chakma? They bring entire three centuries of education with them, the values they grew up with, and being a Bangladeshi, growing up in the Bangladeshi culture, studying in Bengali. In Australia, Chakmas are considered Asians because of their Asian features, almost another layer added to their identity. Thus, I was curious to explore how Chakma immigrants construct their own identity/ hybridity in the third space using Bhabha's (1994) theory of the third space, hybridity. As Bhabha (1994) believes, when immigrants move from one culture to another, they have to learn to navigate between two or more cultures and find a balance between them in order to adapt to the society that they are part of and as a result of this, Bhabha claims, they develop hybrid cultural identities: an 'in-between stage between cultures' (p. 313), which he calls an act of mimicry, imitation of another culture's characteristics. Chakmas in Melbourne live as sojourners, in the transition to being diasporic Australians, very much in touch with the CHT, but at the same time their Bangladeshi, ethnic identity makes them a unique group of people exploring their third space and hybridity.

Another critical theory that I found relatable with my own experience and the Chakma immigrants' position in Australian society was the empowerment theory by Kabeer (1999). I looked at empowerment as moving from enforced powerlessness to a position of power for these immigrants. I was aware that most immigrant Chakmas in Australia grew up in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) at a time where the *Shanti Bahini* were active in demanding and defending their rights and with a heavy presence of the army in the CHT region. Education is an essential means of empowering the oppressed with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process and in affording them to make decisions for their own betterment (Freire, 1970). Because ethnic minorities experience multiple and intersecting inequalities across much of the world, either by law or custom, they are often denied the right to attend schools, earn income, and progress in their profession free from job discrimination. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as the expansion in people's abilities to make strategic life choices (such as choosing life partners, or even immigrating to a developed country for a secure life) in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Education, I believed, has provided the participants the opportunity and means to develop capabilities and believe that they can eventually realise their desired life goals on their own terms.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This literature review chapter has described, explained, and critiqued the literature most relevant and important for this study. As seen in this chapter, generally, as an affordance, education has different

uses for different people. Education plays various roles – it helps individuals become more aware of their identity and, at the same time, can build group identities and help build the national identity for a nation.

The role of education, therefore, is paramount, particularly to empower the underprivileged and the marginalised to overcome poverty and to encourage upward mobility. Chakmas, too, have been a part of this upward mobility, and they have been able to achieve greater security in life through the attainment of education in overseas countries like Australia, partly thanks to equity scholarships from governments, such as AusAID.

In this chapter, I have illustrated the ongoing politics with the Chakma identity and the CHT region and how the people have started identifying themselves as *Jummas* in order to separate themselves both culturally and linguistically from the dominant Bengalis. I then discussed the importance of education, particularly for the Indigenous People, and how Chakmas have utilised education for immigration to a first-world country like Australia. The chapter also discusses how the Chakma immigrants in Australia remain Chakma, preserving their culture and identity in diaspora by creating a strong sense of Chakma community and collaborating with the other diasporic Chakma/*Jumma* communities.

I have also discussed the theories that I engaged with reading before analysing the data that are relevant to answering my research question for this study. These theories are integrated into a framework in Chapter 5, following an inductive research approach. The next chapter discusses methodological choices for this study, explaining the research design, data collection, analysis methods, and ethical considerations.



# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified and critically analysed common themes in the literature and the theories of relevance to the study. The main purpose of this study is to explore what role education and educational achievements have played in the Chakmas migration journey to Australia. The research design for the study is discussed in the following section to address the research question:

*What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?*

This chapter presents an account of the design of this study concerning its methodological choices. It first explains the choice of a qualitative study, and then the selection of the participants is described. Next, the data collection method is explained, along with the rationale for employing the data analysis method. The ways in which my position in this research might influence the research are also discussed, as are ethical considerations and trustworthiness.

## 3.2 Research Design

Selecting an appropriate methodology is essential for academic research as ‘methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based’ (Brown, 2006. p. 27). According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), the nature and quality of research depend on the researcher’s choice of paradigm, which in turn sets up the intent, motivation, and expectation for the research. My epistemological position in this study lies in the interpretive social science paradigm (Neuman, 2011), which is concerned with how people construct and give meaning to their actions in concrete social sciences. This study is an interpretivist, constructivist qualitative study using a case study method to explore Chakma immigrants’ Chakmaness – Chakma identity, language, and culture maintenance in diaspora – using educational affordances. The rationale behind each of these methodological choices is described below.

This study was conducted in Melbourne, involving seven Chakma immigrants who are either Australian permanent residents or Australian citizens who have been able to immigrate to Australia using education and who are, therefore educated Chakmas. Since this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the Chakma immigrants’ journey from the CHT to Australia, the role of education in this journey, and what they are doing to keep their Chakma identity in the diaspora, the research was conducted using a qualitative approach.

### 3.2.1. Qualitative Research

My study is located within a qualitative research paradigm. A qualitative study aims at understanding a social phenomenon as it occurs in a natural setting and 'how people interpret their experiences' (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). According to Bryman (2008), the stress in qualitative research is 'on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants' (p. 367). Therefore, to understand the participants' world, I needed to get closer to the participants' social world to examine and explore Chakma immigrants' challenges and experiences in their 'journey' as immigrants from a discriminated, subjugated, oppressed, and subalternised minority community to becoming an empowered group of people in a third country. I wanted to understand their perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and feelings or 'interpretation' as generally regarded by Bryman (2008, p. 367). I am also a participant in this study because the qualitative researcher is included as an explicit part of knowledge production rather than being excluded (Usher, 1996). Since this study explored the identity and culture maintenance issues through the lived experiences and life stories of the participants, their personal views formed the major part of this research.

This is also a constructivist study because constructivists argue that reality is 'subjective and constructed' (Lather, 2006, p. 787), and to attain a thorough description of a particular social phenomenon (Chowdhury, 2019), a researcher needs to 'understand how individuals' subjective interpretations of reality affect the formation of reality' (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015, p. 11). This study also concurs with the constructivist approach in that it problematises the subjectivities of the Chakmas' unique interpretations of their lived experiences.

I have considered reality as 'socially constructed' (Mertens, 2005, p. 12) and, in particular, how it is co-constructed between the researcher (myself) and the researched (my participants), relying upon the 'participants' views of the situation being studied' (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). 'At the heart of constructivism is a concern for the lived experience of the world as it is felt and understood by social actors' (Schwandt, as cited in Au, 1998, p. 301). Constructivists believe that knowledge (like ethnic identity) is created by human agents (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 78). My aim was to gradually construct knowledge and meanings about these first-generation Chakma immigrants' lived experiences and whether or how education has helped them build a better and secure life in Australia.

Qualitative studies report on data in a descriptive manner rather than through numbers, and they usually solicit rich and thick descriptions (Geertz, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The thick description refers to the detailed account of field experiences and the 'world of human experience' (L. Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36) in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context. In my case, because I am positioned as a Chakma immigrant

myself, I felt it was necessary for me to talk to my participants and to understand the situation and phenomena through their account to look for their personal accounts descriptively and in their complex manifestations, lest I impose my own views. Moreover, research focused on pre formulated survey ideas would also be inappropriate since I am not looking at frequencies or any kind of quantification.

I not only collected data from the interview transcripts and background information forms but also acquired a deeper understanding and insight from participants' tones, expressions, and emotions. I compared the life stories of the participants who shared a common life event or similar experiences. The interviews were transcribed and analysed by myself, and copies of transcriptions were provided to the participants to validate the stories, and revisions were made for the discrepancies.

My own positioning as a researcher meant that I actively engaged in these interviews and the focus group discussion, interacting with the participants in the spirit of qualitative research, using a somewhat loosely constructed model (Wiersma, 1995, p. 212). I present my own position as a researcher and as a Chakma woman in this context. I then explain why and how this study is located within a qualitative case study paradigm. I explain the rationales behind the choices I made in selecting the case for this study. However, I understand that there are criticisms of qualitative research, such as the sample size, relying on the researcher's experience, and therefore researcher bias, or difficulty to replicate the results, and so forth. Some of these are discussed in sections 3.7 through 3.9.

### 3.2.2 A Case Study Approach

The mode of inquiry of the research is said to be guided by a research paradigm, 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action - the action being the research activity' (Guba, 1990, p. 7). Embedded within the paradigm are ontology (defining the form and nature of reality) and epistemology (defining what can be known and how it can be known), guiding the chosen methodology (Crotty, 1998). A paradigm is based on our ontological and epistemological assumptions about reality; it shapes the way we view and interact with our social world.

As the phenomenon of immigration and culture maintenance in the diaspora is a complex issue and could be seen to be bound up by the practices of a particular field, I combined a case study with an ethnographic approach. I have used some characteristics of ethnographic research to capture and do justice to my participants' lived experiences. Although I did not live with the participants, I collected data inside their houses and observed them interacting with others in the family in their natural settings. I was invited to social and religious gatherings and shared spaces with them by positioning myself as a case. In other words, I combine case study and ethnographic reporting methods in this study.

Therefore, this approach can be called a hybrid approach characterised by two goals: the researcher getting directly involved in the study setting and observing the setting, and collecting data. Also, according to Creswell (2014), a case study is an 'in-depth exploration of a bounded system' (p. 469), a study where the phenomena (or social reality) are inseparable from the context (Merriam, 1998). In my case, I looked at my participants as they interacted in their natural environment.

The case study approach is appropriate for this study because I am particularly interested in exploring, interpreting, and generating in-depth understandings of the case of the Chakma immigrants' immigration journey, their settlement process, and experiences in Melbourne. Since case studies are bounded by time and place, researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a geographical boundary needs to be clearly established. I focused on Chakma immigrants in Melbourne, and regarding the time boundary, the data was collected from within a set time period, from January to August 2019. A case study is like a snapshot image of a place, group, or individual, where 'the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible' (Punch, 2005, p. 144).

This study falls into the category of a qualitative research paradigm involving individual in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. Qualitative research focuses on the quality of experience, trying to describe and understand the essence of human experience, whereas quantitative research focuses more on quantity, frequency, or magnitude – on matters of how much or how many. More specifically, this is a descriptive case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2004), aiming to achieve a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under research. A case study is 'a strategy of doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 1993, p. 146). Zucker (2009) states, 'there are many considerations prior to embarking on case study method, but at the onset, it should be clear that no other descriptive method is possible or will get the level of description the researcher is looking for, except case study method' (p. 3).

This approach helped me in developing a better understanding of the complexities of the social interactions and religious, cultural, and social practices that play very important roles in maintaining Chakmaness among the Chakma immigrants in Melbourne. I adopted qualitative research because it simply describes phenomena in words instead of numbers. I also decided to work inductively, which involves listening to my participants' accounts of their experiences and then identifying patterns rather than specifying patterns, then trying to find out how representative these are of a particular population. Therefore, I wanted to capture meanings, definitions, descriptions of events from my participants. The transcripts were documented using collective case study methodology, according to

the participants' gender and different age groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Three males and four female participants were selected and the age range of the participants was from 32 to 56.

In short, a case study approach offered opportunities for me to understand the enduring preoccupations of the Chakma community in a holistic and in-depth manner. In addition to this, I was able to invest in my own reflexivity as a framework of reference to retrospectively theorise my own life events.

### 3.2.3 The Case

I aim to specify what kind of case study this project is. As mentioned above, the case study implies a rather specific topic bounded by time and space contexts (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, I had to carefully select the items within and without the system of my inquiry. Both Stake (2006) and Freebody (2003) identify two types of case studies: in intrinsic case studies, the researcher has intrinsic interest getting a deep understanding of what is important about the case within its world (not so much about the researcher's world). In contrast, instrumental case studies draw the researcher toward illustrating how the concerns of researchers and theories are manifest in the case, usually a secondary interest of the researcher, and are used to support other interests. I decided to adopt an intrinsic case study since my interest is to understand and conceptualise certain concepts, such as the immigration journey, their use of educational affordances, diaspora, and culture preservation within my participants' worlds.

A case is defined as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (bounded by time and space): an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a real-life context and, therefore, not an artificially generated situation. In other words, instead of offering statistical representativeness, the case study offers the opportunity to study a phenomenon within its context and thereby develop a deep comprehension of how it relates to its context (Halinen & Tornroos, 2005).

Since this study investigates the processes of identity and culture maintenance of a group of Chakmas in Melbourne, this choice fits well. Yin (2011) strongly argues that a case study itself is a research strategy, an observation of particular importance for this study as it gives the case study an independent position in relation to other research methods. Researchers use the case study method to identify what is common about that case, what is specific about it (Hyett et al., 2014). (Yin (2009) and G. Thomas (2011) also explain that case studies are the preferred strategy explaining how and why something happened.

The case study was appropriate for this study since I am particularly interested in exploring, interpreting, and generating an in-depth understanding of the case of the Chakma immigrants' identity and culture preservation in the diaspora. I focused on Melbourne, where all my participants

live. Regarding the time boundary, the data collection process was limited to between January and August 2019. Defining the boundary is probably the most difficult task of case study research, yet it is crucial to do so to avoid collecting too much data or degenerating into sample descriptions. The limitation of boundaries has a theoretical dimension, involving the selection of only the data relevant to the research questions. The use of case studies in qualitative research is a well-established method as a case can be of different sizes depending on the object of the case study – such as a country, a city, a social group, a family, or just a single individual (Gerring, 2007).

Before discussing how I selected the participants, I will highlight one specific decision related to the research design: reflexivity. It concerned the language I would use for data collection. The participants all spoke three languages - Chakma, Bengali, and English. Using English had two advantages: I could simply transcribe an interview as it was told, and therefore I would not corrupt any meaning, words, or expressions during the translation process. In contrast, Chakma is our first language, and Bengali is the language in which we studied and, therefore, read and write. I was also nearly certain that none of the participants would read and write in Chakma (see Section 2.2). On the other hand, I was going to interview people who have at least one Australian degree and have been living here for many years. After critical reflection, I decided that I would not impose on them to speak in English; I would ask them to use whichever language they would feel comfortable with. Translanguaging was welcome, and the participants chose to answer the questions in English but used some words and expressions in both Chakma and Bengali to provide truer or more contextualised meaning, particularly during the focus group discussion.

The following sections describe my positionality in this research, participants, and data collection procedure.

### 3.3 My Position as a Researcher

Positionality has been established as an essential component in research, especially in its relation to how knowledge is produced (Chereni, 2014). Within the broader field of qualitative research, reflection on the researcher's position and how this has an impact on knowledge production and the research process (Mruck & Breuer, 2003) needs to be considered cautiously. Our personal affiliations as well as social and local factors influence how we conduct research and interpret its results. Therefore, understanding insider and outsider positionality is a vital issue. Qualitative researchers take on a variety of member roles when they are in a research setting, and these roles can change from complete membership of the group being studied – an insider – to being a complete stranger – an outsider. In terms of the knowledge that insiders and outsiders have, Griffith (1998) argues that insider researchers tend to have an intimate knowledge of the group being studied, whereas outsider

researchers do not have an intimate understanding before entry into the research site. Griffith (1998) raised two key questions in theoretical discussion: whether the insider status privileges or disqualifies our knowledge claims or whether the outsider status allows the researchers to understand the group being studied, as they are greatly different. I believe that a researcher's positionality is never fully fixed; it is always moving between domains, such as the field, academia, and the personal.

Many scholars have also talked about positioning the self in the research process and the importance of this. Being a Chakma woman who came to Australia first on an AusAID scholarship and then decided to immigrate, and who has been living in the country for nearly twenty years, I have experienced insiderness in this study. I have had similar experiences to my participants, sometimes almost identical; and therefore, I believe I was able to conduct this research with a better understanding of the journeys that the participants shared with me. According to Denscombe (1998), 'we can only make sense of the world in a way that we have learnt to do using conceptual tools which are based on our culture and our experiences' (p. 73). Similarly, Berger (2013) reports on her study of Israeli immigrants in the US, and how coming from the shared experience, she was better equipped with insights and the ability to understand implied content, and was more sensitised to certain dimensions of the data, and understood the responses in a 'more nuanced and multileveled way' (p. 5).

I believe for empirical research insiderness is a key to reach the participants. For this study, it was imperative, because I share the same language, ethnicity, and cultural norms, and I had the knowledge of how to sensitively and respectfully approach the subjects (Smyth & Holian, 2008). Furthermore, no translator or interpreter was required for this project. Although with some participants the beginning was slightly awkward, once we got to know each other better, the interviews followed smoothly. Particularly during the second round of interviews, I felt I was treated very much like an insider. They showed me utmost respect as a PhD researcher, welcomed and entertained me with Chakma food. Some even called and emailed me to inquire if I needed more information or interviews. I firmly believe that had I come from a different cultural or linguistic background; my data would not have been this rich.

However, I understand that such positioning is not flawless and could conceal biases in this partially ethnographic study of the Chakma community. Researching one's own ethnic community could bring disadvantages, as greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity (DeLyser, 2001). To minimise this, I questioned attitudes, behaviours that are usually seen as normal and taken for granted by many interviewees. Asselin (2003) suggests that it is best for insider researchers to gather data with their eyes open; although the researcher might be part of the culture under study, he or she might not understand the subculture, which points to the need for bracketing assumptions.

This recognition of positionality requires considerable reflexivity, that is, awareness of one's own understandings of the self, social structures of gender, class, ethnicity, existing perceptions, cultural, religious, and moral background, and how they may affect the outcome of the research. In other words, reflexivity involves my ability to reflect on the positionality and experiences of 'I' in the fieldwork (Rose, 1997), which is especially important in qualitative research since methods such as case studies with interviews require a lot of time to be spent by the researcher with the participants. Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). Reflexivity then urges us 'to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research' (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228).

Therefore, reflexivity is about how my own values, experiences, beliefs, and social identities have shaped this research and also about how my involvement in this research may have affected and possibly changed me. According to Gergen and Gergen (2000), reflexive researchers present honest and self-searching accounts of the research process, demonstrate to their audiences their historical situatedness, their personal investments in the research, acknowledging various biases they may bring and reveal their surprises and undoings in the process of the research endeavour. Again, I acknowledge the importance of the researcher's reflexivity in terms of both conscious but also hidden bias; I admit that this research is not completely impartial (a constructivist study can never be), and my acknowledgement and acceptance of this position to some degree counters it.

The fact that I share similar and sometimes almost identical experiences with my participants has made me feel entitled to be called a participant-observer of the Chakma community in Melbourne, a very important issue in this study. My experience, starting from being an international student to becoming a permanent resident, and finally an Australian citizen, positions me as both insider (as I share many of the experiences of my participants) and an outsider as I consider these experiences through the researcher's lens. This position of insider/outsider sometimes can be a dilemma for the researcher. However, to be truthful to the data, I presented my data exactly as they appeared in the interviews and the focus group discussion.

Apart from my own insider/outsider positioning, it is worth mentioning the participants' perceptions of me. During the interviews, I tried to keep a marginal positioning, for instance, not attempting to intervene and presenting myself as naturally as possible. I was concerned that my participants might not open up to me with their personal stories, such as their struggles to find employment (a common experience for immigrants from developing countries) in the initial years after immigration, or their



hardships in settling down in Australia (culturally, we tend to reveal mostly good things to others and hide not so good things). However, I was rather surprised by the outcome of each interview. For example, at the end of my interview with Nanadhon, he said, “I believe you are the right person for doing a study on Chakmas in Australia because you seem to be very passionate about your study”. I, too, believe this passion for studying the Chakma and about the Chakma has made this study more enjoyable for me. It was also a self-discovery of my own identity as a Chakma person.

In other words, as much as I look into my participants, I also look into myself and try to theoretically understand my own experiences as a Chakma immigrant and how, through educational affordances, I have been able to come to Australia, being able to conduct this research in Melbourne while at the same time retrospectively exploring and analysing my own biography as a Chakma, as a woman and sometimes as a mother in the same context as my participants.

In the next section, I describe how I selected participants using certain criteria, the process of recruiting participants, and how I built rapport with them.

### 3.4 Participants’ Selection Criteria

The criteria for selecting participants of first-generation Chakma immigrants in Melbourne, Australia, consisted of the following:

- 1) The participants were born in Bangladesh, immigrated to Australia, and are either permanent residents or citizens of Australia;
- 2) The participants have lived for at least five years in Australia; and,
- 3) The participants studied at an Australian university.

The above selection criteria were chosen based on certain considerations. It usually takes a minimum of two years to complete a degree in an Australian University, after which the participants would apply for permanent residency (PR). Becoming PRs would take another three to four years, and I believed this transition from international students to becoming permanent residents and finally Australian citizens would give the participants the opportunity to experience social and cultural changes/shifts within themselves, and therefore, I would be able to get rich data.

The following section will describe the participant recruitment process and how I built rapport with the participants.

#### 3.4.1 Participants Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the Chakma community in Melbourne through social networks. I posted a recruitment notice on Facebook to ask my friends to spread the news about the research project. One of my friends from Bangladesh suggested I contact Gita as a prospective participant. I

contacted Gita and organised an initial meeting, which eventually led to my first interview with her. The interview was conducted after I explained the purpose of the study, and she signed the Consent Form (*Appendix II*). I was ready with a set of questions to proceed with the interview. After interviewing Gita, I realised she had a very good connection with all the Chakmas in Melbourne; she provided me with details about how many new immigrants or students arrived in Melbourne, who lived where, and so on. Therefore, I asked her to suggest some names of potential participants who would fit the selection criteria. The intention in asking her was so that I could find five or six more participants whom I did not know well or did not know at all to enhance objectivity. Here, I applied snowball sampling, a well-established informal method to reach the target population (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). I mentioned that I was looking at an equal number of males and females and possibly from a wide range of age groups. This means that I recruited my participants through the process of reference from one person to the next (Streeton, Cook & Campbell, 2004). Blaikie (2000) believes that snowballing is a potential source for building up a sociogram of people who consider themselves social equals. My participants were social equals not only in terms of their ethnicity, educational background, and the similarity of immigration, but also their similar social circles.

Gita contacted several members in the Chakma community, keeping in mind the purpose of the research. To my great delight, 15 potential participants had shown interest and enthusiasm. Gita sent me their names with contact details. I sent out an email to all the 15 prospective participants with the Explanatory Statement (*Appendix I*) form seeking at least six more participants. All fifteen responded promptly, showing great interest in being involved with this project. However, I had to be selective in choosing the right participants and purposefully selected three males and three females in addition to Gita. Once participation confirmations were received, I made personal phone contact with the potential participants for interviews.

Apart from Babu, I had had limited previous contact with the rest of the participants, although I was aware that they were living in Melbourne. For example, Binu was a complete stranger; I met her for the first time when I went to interview her at her home. I also had very little to no knowledge of their occupations or where they lived. Babu was raised in Rangamati, while Binu and Gita were originally from Khagrachhari but grew up in Rangamati. Nanadhon, and Mrinal in Khagrachhari, Devi grew up in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, with limited contact with the CHT, and Juni was raised in a few districts in Bangladesh due to her father's transferable job.

### 3.4.2 Building Rapport with the Participants

In the initial contact, the comfort level of each of the participants was taken into consideration very seriously. I arranged the meetings according to each participant's choice: for the first round, two

interviews were conducted on campus at Monash University. I booked a quiet room to make sure that our interviews did not get interrupted. I drove to the residences of three participants and for two to their workplaces.

The scenario for the second round interview was almost identical in terms of selecting a venue for interviews. I was conscious of how I greeted them – it must not be in too westernised a way, and the tone I used – which had to be age-appropriate. I was there to listen to their stories. I realised that a little chit-chat about their childhood and hometown before commencing the interview created a friendly environment, and each participant looked relaxed, which helped me build rapport. Oakley (1981) saw rapport building as a fundamental process through which an interviewer can present themselves as an insider to the participants. I understand the conflicts of an insider and an outsider of a researcher, which I addressed earlier. Before the conversation ensued, I acknowledged and noted their willingness to share their personal information and told them that I take confidentiality very seriously. I also made them aware that they could withdraw themselves from the study at any point before my submission, or if they decided not to include something they had said, I would not report it in the thesis.

Gaining trust, maintaining confidentiality, and anonymity were key concerns for this study. Due to the small number of Chakma people in Melbourne, I was anxious that the participants might be worried about being identified and not revealing true stories. I explained that I would use pseudonyms to secure anonymity. Gillham (2000) believes that ‘anonymity encourages people to talk freely’ and to ‘disclose facts, experiences, feelings, or attitudes that they would not disclose to other persons’ (p. 15). To my great delight, all of them were eager and showed great enthusiasm to share their stories. Coincidentally, I found out that six of the seven participants came to Australia on Australian Development Scholarships (AusAID), except Binu, who was sponsored by her aunt for immigration.

All participants completed either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree from an Australian university in various disciplines. They all have been working in various employment sectors, namely, as a GP (General Practitioner of medicine), a chemical engineer, a software engineer, an educator at a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) college, a chemist, a financial analyst, and an aged care worker. By gender, four were females, and three were males, while their ages ranged from 32 to 56. Therefore, these selection criteria allowed me to collect data from participants from diverse educational backgrounds and to be able to look at identity issues from a more objective perspective.

### 3.5 Methods of Data Collection

During the Christmas holidays in 2018, I visited Bangladesh with my family. There were two purposes of this trip. One, to re-connect my twin daughters with their relatives and, most importantly, collect

secondary data about the CHT and its people. As part of that, I was extremely fortunate to be able to talk to the Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy in his residence. The Chief is very well known for his various roles; few among many are his dedication in supporting the CHT peoples and representing them in the world communities' summits and seminars, writing countless articles about the political situation in the CHT, and negotiating with the Bangladeshi government for the betterment of the people. As expected, it was not easy to get an appointment with the Chief. At one point, I almost gave up. Fortunately, my younger sister, who has worked with him on some projects, secured one hour on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, the only day he could manage time, as it was a public holiday. I was staying with my parents at Khagrachhari; Rangamati, where the chief's residence is, was a two-hour drive away. This was the first time I met the Chief. I recorded the conversation and listened to it many times while I was transcribing my interviews with the participants. This gave me solid background knowledge, which is directly relevant to this study. Although it is not customary in Chakma culture to seek permission from the Chief before conducting research, I felt the need to let him know that I was about to embark on a research project on diasporic Chakmas in Melbourne.

I also collected secondary data from different sources. I had academic conversations with my father Dr. Sudhin Kumar Chakma, about how education has changed the Chakma society, as his unpublished PhD dissertation title was 'Social Changes in Chakma Society'. My father has a comprehensive collection of books on the CHT, which I made good use of. I spoke to my uncle, a retired college principal, along with a number of *murubbis*, the elderly who hold the knowledge and institutional memory in the society, to learn about how and when education had become so important for the Chakma. I also bought and collected published and unpublished data in both English and Bengali. These are mostly books, journal articles, and research reports by foreign aid agencies and reports by human rights groups.

Upon my return from Bangladesh, I transcribed my conversation with the Chief, read and analysed some of the books and documents that I carried with me before I conducted interviews with the seven participants to prepare myself for the interviews. This trip to Bangladesh was very timely for me to understand my research. I also kept an eye on social media, primarily on Facebook and Twitter, to keep myself up-to-date with the latest news in the CHT and the diasporic Chakmas.

The following section describes the data collection process, mainly semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. I chose the interview because it complies with the interpretive research paradigm in epistemology, which assumes that social reality is constructed by the participants, and their world should be approached through their own perspectives.

### 3.5.1 The Semi-structured Interviews

In Melbourne, I started collecting data in January 2019. In each interview, I asked my participants to fill in a brief form containing information about their age, the time they have been living in Australia, occupation, marital status, number of children, and age (*Appendix V*). I asked them if they had preferred any name to be used. Only Babu requested to use this as his pseudo name, while others gave me the option to choose.

In collecting data for this study, I needed to pay attention to the participants' world – what complex experiences they had been through in relation to education, remaining Chakma, and keeping connected to the CHT and the implications of their decisions as first-generation immigrants. Instead of merely taking their responses as complete, straightforward, spatio-temporally fixed, I paid attention to the complexities of their behaviour prompted by my interview questions. I was also conscious of the power that exists in the transactions of interviews, as it is in all human interactions. In this regard, I aimed to create a welcoming, non-threatening environment so that the participants were willing to share their knowledge and experiences and open up their feelings (S. J. Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

In qualitative research, interviewing is one of the most powerful ways to learn about other people. Hence, how the interviewees talk and what is said both become crucial to the credibility of the study's outcomes (Mishler, 1986). As a research method, there are multiple advantages of interviews; among them, flexibility allows the researcher to gather and produce detailed data and meaning-making, where the interviewer interjects him/herself into the interview in various ways. During interviews, the interactions and meanings are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity (Scheurich, 1997) where spaces open up for participants to clarify or even move away from the topic (Scheurich, 1997). For instance, the interviewer and the interviewee draw on mutually familiar events, experiences, or outlooks (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) to not only establish rapport but also to focus the conversation on particular aspects of meaning. In this study, I was particularly conscious of interviews as a site wherein knowledge and meaning were jointly constructed by the participants' own experiences of being first-generation immigrants and my own experience of the same. Meaning and knowledge are established on mutual agreement and when the researcher and the participants shared strategies.

I collected data from multiple participants like many other researchers who have applied the case study approach to understand the participants' holistic experiences (K. Guo & Dalli, 2012). As mentioned earlier, there were seven participants in this research; therefore, many might question the small sample size. However, due to the nature of this qualitative research, which investigates the unique lived experiences of participants (Merriam, 2002), the sample size could be small. Merriam

(2009) believes that 'Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them . . . and when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate' (p. 88). Merriam suggested research using interviews as a suitable approach to investigate peoples' experiences. However, I understand that not all data can be generated through interviews.

To conduct interviews, I followed Seidman's (2006) three-step interview process. Although Seidman's (2006) process is used predominantly for phenomenological studies, I have used it as a guideline as I believed it would generate richer and thicker data (Geertz, 2012). Specifically, I used a variation of Seidman's interview methodology. Seidman (2006) recommends that in order to reach the depth that is necessary to understand participants' experiences thoroughly; they should be interviewed in three phases. The first interview establishes participants' life histories and context for the phenomenon; the second allows participants to form and share the details, and the third encourages participants to reflect on the meaning of the experience.

However, I made some alterations to the interview structure. Seidman (2006) proposes conducting the three interviews on three different dates. I conducted all three phases of the process within two interviews. Initially, I had planned to follow Seidman's guideline strictly, but during the second round interview, I realised it was possible to complete the third step by taking a short break of 15 minutes before commencing the final step. With the participants' consent, I managed to complete the three-step interview process in two days for each participant. Seidman (2006) himself identified that 'alterations to the three-interview structure can certainly be explored . . . as long as the structure is maintained that allows the participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives' (pp. 21-22). Therefore, I believe it was more time-effective for the participants and for me to have completed the three-step interview in two days.

I interviewed the participants focusing on six areas:

- 1) Questions related to their hometowns, their childhood, schooling, and how, whether, and to what extent education was considered important. The participants were encouraged to describe the environment they grew up in, such as in a supportive neighbourhood or if they had experienced the political turmoils of the CHT.
- 2) I explored what led their decision to come to Australia for a higher degree, their experiences during their study at an Australian University in terms of English language proficiency, food, language, and culture, and ultimately why they decided to immigrate.

- 3) I wanted to know their current issues related to their Chakmaness, how they are raising their children in a multicultural city like Melbourne, and what they are doing to retain Chakma language, culture, and identity.
- 4) How frequently they visit their hometown (the CHT, the first country), and how they keep regular contact with family and relatives back home.
- 5) Whether and/or how, and why they keep in touch with other diasporic Chakmas outside Bangladesh and
- 6) Their thoughts about the future of the CHT and its people.

The interview questions also asked the participants to relate changes they experienced in connecting to the CHT or Australia – the concept of their own identity, whether they feel that they belong to Australian society, as well as anything they wished the world to know about the Chakma people. I believe it was the appropriate interview process for this study because it provided the participants with the opportunity to tell their stories of lived experiences starting from the CHT to Melbourne.

The adapted interview process can be seen in Figure 3.1, below.

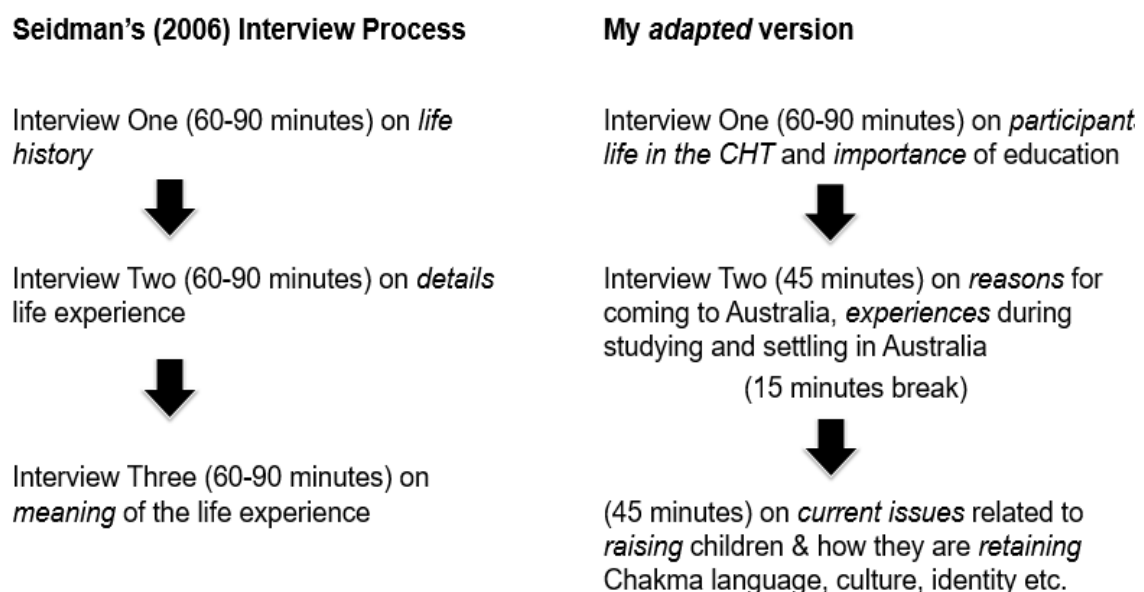


Figure 3.1 Interview process – adapted from Seidman's (2006) three-step interview series

### 3.5.2 The Focus Group Discussion

After transcribing both rounds of interviews and reading them thoroughly, I realised that I needed to organise a focus group discussion (FGD) which was conducted in August 2019. My aim was to clarify certain aspects, such as how participants' educational experiences had shaped the way they eventually started viewing themselves in relation to not only to the CHT but also to Australia and to

the world. As I believed, the FGD would expose or prompt the participants into revealing thoughts and information that they would not otherwise individually, which would help me synthesise some statements they had shared separately. I made amendments to my Ethics application in order to get approval for an FGD.

The rich data and opportunities that came from the interactions of the participants during the FGD were invaluable. It prompted engagement, and the dynamics of the conversation changed several times as the participants were trying to recreate the statements from individual interviews. During the hour and a half long focus group discussion I realised some participants had already changed positions regarding their changing belongingness to Australia. For instance, Gita, in her first interview in January, showed a confused status of mind, not knowing whether she would ever be able to settle down as an Australian mentally. However, seven months later, I saw a different Gita, more content with herself, even believing that Melbourne was her true home.

I also gained a better understanding of their perspectives on a number of important issues, for example, the patriarchal Chakma society, or how they view the roles of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) operating in the CHT. Interestingly, the issues of Chakmas dominating the other minorities also came up during the focus group discussion, which was very helpful and important for my data analysis process. Another aspect that surprised me was Devi's shifting position on the relationship between the Chakma and Bengali diasporas in Melbourne. During a one-on-one interview with me, Devi was very vocal that she did not want her only son to be strongly connected to Bangladesh and Bangladeshi culture; however, in focus group discussion, she opined that she felt sad knowing her son would not be able to read her favourite books in Bengali, for example, short stories by Rabindranath Tagore. This was probably because the others became rather emotional while talking about Bangladesh and how many Bengali activists and friends they had studied with in Bangladesh are helping with recognition of the ethnic minorities.

Apart from the above-mentioned two methods of data collection, I also had email correspondence with participants, especially when I needed clarification on certain aspects. In addition, I was engaged in online chats and phone conversations with the participants when needed. Without any exception, all seven participants were very supportive, helpful, and actively engaged with the data collection process and throughout this thesis's writing process.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

This section describes the processes through which I analysed the data and how I treated data to arrive at major themes. Data collection and data analysis were instantaneous throughout the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Interviewing the Chakma Chief, the two rounds of semi-structured interviews, a focus



group discussion, observing how Chakmas in Bangladesh and other countries work together on social media and what kinds of activities they engage themselves in were all done to analyse how Chakmas keep themselves connected with other diasporic Chakmas and what they think about the future of their people. I made my best effort to enable my participants' voices to be heard beyond what I read in the transcript by listening to the recordings again and again to sense the experiences they had shared with me.

The interviews for this study were conducted in a circular manner rather than in linear and alternating stages where the already collected data were analysed in order to identify what further data needed to be collected. Therefore, data collection and interpretation procedures were linked very closely. As mentioned earlier in this section, my aim was to generate rich and thick data; I believe this circular way of collecting data helped me achieve that. Asking participants to construct a narrative in a story-telling manner of their life during interviews was also another important tool to gather rich data. However, I did not treat the narratives of my participants as straightforward and accurate, but as stories people tell about themselves to represent a certain version of their life event, such as their immigration journey. It sometimes felt as if the participants wanted to highlight certain aspects of their backgrounds or experiences of their settlement process to another country, their discriminatory experiences in Bangladesh, or their relationship with Bengalis in Melbourne. I noted these feelings in my reflexive journal and kept in mind that people project themselves differently under certain circumstances – these notes helped me to compare and clarify certain aspects in the focus group discussion.

I first transcribed the recorded interviews without leaving out anything that seemed irrelevant to my study. I decided to transcribe two interviews at a time before conducting the next two in order to understand which questions were helpful to participants to share their experiences so as to modify or add more to the existing questions. After I finished transcribing the first seven interviews, I read the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the data and to better understand the overall meaning (Creswell, 2009). I first read them individually, then in comparison with each other. During this process, I realised I was sometimes instinctively comparing myself with the participants' experiences as a woman or at other times as an immigrant and as a mother - 'did I feel like that too?' or 'how come I didn't experience that?' These thoughts helped me frame further questions and subsequent interviews, and I recorded my observations, assessments, and procedures in a series of referred memos throughout the whole interviewing process. I recorded a short reflection of my initial thoughts and the participants' body language or tone right after each interview on my phone, sometimes while driving straight after conducting an interview so that I did not forget or miss any

essential details. These metatextual memos provided me great assistance in shaping my questions to the next participant.

### 3.6.1 Coding the Data

I treated analysing the data as a complex and interpretive exercise. According to Creswell (2014), 'analysing qualitative data requires understanding how to make sense of text so that you can form answers to your research questions' (p. 235). Therefore, coding the data by hand (manually) was the next phase of exploring the data, starting with open coding to identify concepts or categories. I immersed myself into the details of the data, trying to understand what the data was telling me before breaking it into parts. I used line-by-line open coding with reflection memos (Saldana, 2016; D. R. Thomas, 2006) for two reasons; first, to identify segments related to my research aim and second, to label the segments of texts as initial themes. I named the themes in three ways: participants' words or short phrases, my own words or thoughts, and literature concepts, which were ideal for an inductive way of developing a more general picture of the data (D. R. Thomas, 2006). The analysis of qualitative data by hand means that researchers read the data, mark it by hand and divide it into parts (Creswell, 2014). Different coloured highlighters were used to mark the parts of data related to a particular topic (e.g., *Upo-jati*, *Pahari*, *Jumma*, media representation, *Keyang*, *Buddha Purnima*, religious rituals, communal violence, safety, etc. ([see glossary])).

Next, based on the initial coding, some specific segments of information emerged from the texts, which were put together in several groups for continuous coding of the second round interview and FGD transcripts. During the continuous coding process, some of the coded texts were re-coded when they seemed inappropriate to further focus the data (Focused Coding) by re-examining open codes and combining some related categories. These segments of information were labelled either from participants' phrases or my words based on their description. I printed some of the texts for further analysis, such as coding *Upo-jati*, *Pahari*, *Jumma*, and Adivasi and media representation into 'Identity in the Politics of Nomenclature', and *Keyang*, *Buddha Purnima*, religious rituals into 'Buddhism as an invisible marker of difference'.

Focused coding searches for the most frequent or significant codes (Saldana, 2016). It categorises coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity. The thematic coding was then done by reviewing the data again and coding to develop refined themes to explore how the concepts/categories are interrelated. When I believed data saturation was achieved, 11 themes were developed and subsequently when overlapping was identified, redundancy was reduced amongst these free themes (Thomas, 2006), whilst memos continued to be written to help continuous data reduction. Finally, after careful reading of all 11 free themes, three core themes and their sub-themes

were developed to incorporate the research findings. To understand the data in depth and to be able to answer the research question, developing themes were important (Creswell, 2014) for this study.

### 3.6.2 Bringing the Analysis Together

My overall framework for analysing the data was arranged into three levels:

Level One - six categories were identified based on how participants answered the core interview questions for this study (see Section 4.5.1);

Level Two - after I identified blocks, patterns, and analysis of the data from Level 1, three prominent themes and subthemes emerged; and finally,

Level Three - capstone analysis, a synthesis of the themes from Level 2, captured key responses to the research question.

In Level one analysis, the transcripts from the two rounds of interviews and notes from the focus group discussion were first analysed for each question. Then the transcripts were manually fragmented and coded in terms of descriptive coding, initial coding, concept coding, and process coding (Saldana, 2016; D. R. Thomas, 2006) throughout the analysis. In addition, codes were inductively developed via iterative coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in order to cover the depth and breadth of the data. Level One analysis generated 41 codes or categories depending on how the participants directly or indirectly mentioned these code terms. These concerned how education has helped them to come to Australia, in which ways education has helped them have a better perspective on the positions of the peoples, what they are doing to preserve and maintain Chakma culture, and how they keep regular contact with Chakmas in Bangladesh and other countries.

In Level Two analysis, to find consistency, the codes were constantly compared with Level One analysis to find systematic patterns, blocks, and themes among the similarities and differences. At the beginning of Level Two analysis, when data saturation was achieved, the categories from Level 1 were developed into 11 free themes. Subsequently, after reducing overlapping and redundancy amongst these free themes, based on a careful reading of all the 11 free themes, three core themes and their subthemes were developed. Level Three capstone analysis is where I synthesised the three themes to identify key answers to the research question. These three final themes reflected participants' views and were regarded as the key roles that education has played in the Chakma migration story, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

At this point, I could see some theoretical inklings of three existing theories (see Sections 1.7 and 2.6) that I had been reading along with some other theories (for example, those of Kabeer, 1990 and Spivak,

1988). Finally, after reading the data and the three final themes, I believed that the data had led me to the three theories that I have incorporated in this study, which I explain in Chapter 5 in detail.

The steps that I have taken in analysing the data – how I worked through Level One analysis and moved to Level Two and Level Three are visualised in Figure 3.2.

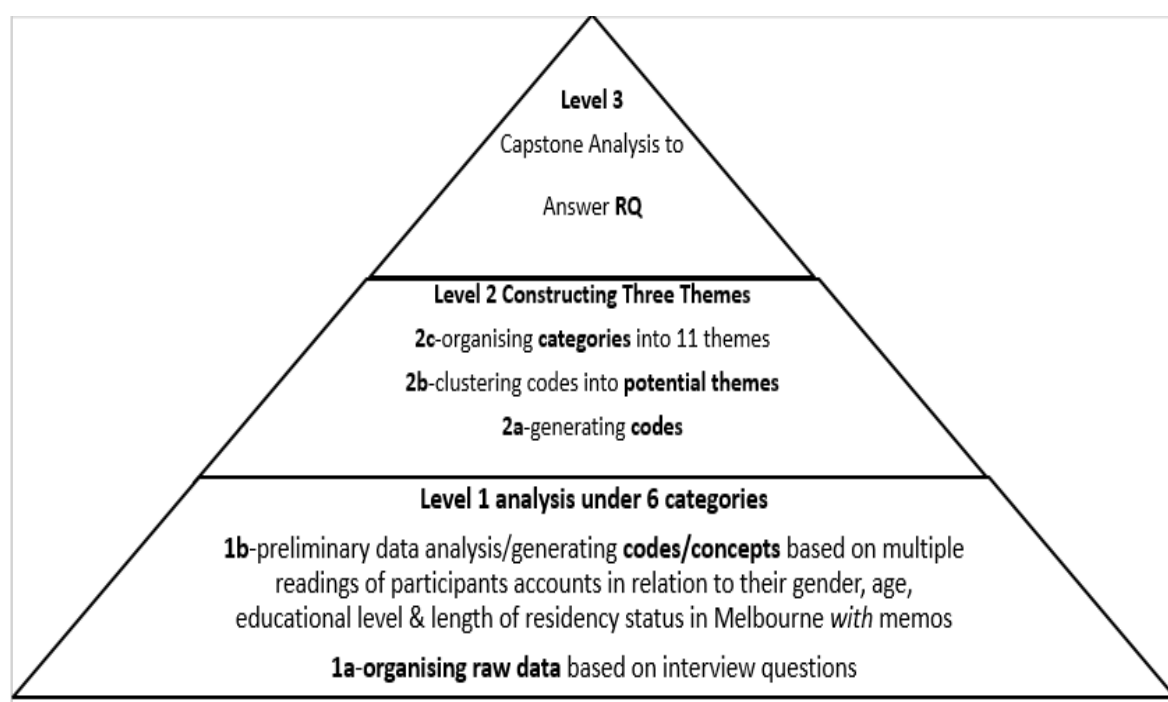


Figure 3.2 Data Analysis and Coding process – adapted from Saldana (2016) & D. R. Thomas (2006)

### 3.7 Rigour and Ethical Considerations

Issues of validity and reliability are central to both quantitative and qualitative research projects. During the process of collecting and analysing data, a researcher needs to ensure that the findings, as well as the interpretations, are accurate and credible (Creswell, 2014, p. 258). In the case of this study, I used triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is ‘the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 29). To ensure credibility, the data was collected using more than one method; interviews and a focus group discussion. For this study, member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the data, ‘a process in which researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the content’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 259). Participants were asked to review the transcriptions of interviews to get their feedback on the narratives, themes, and findings of the study to ensure that the report was fair and accurate, to ensure, in turn, that I could make changes or add in case I had missed out or misinterpreted something.

Another important dimension to consider when conducting research is ethics. Issues such as power relations (between and among the researcher and participants), conflicts of interest (between the researcher, institutes, participants, and other stakeholders), the anonymity (of participants), and confidentiality (of data) need to be accounted for in order to make sure the study was conducted ethically. According to O'Toole and Beckett (2010), ethics is important as 'they are connected to the authenticity and validity of the research project' (p. 96). I acknowledge that the processes of data collection and interpretation of the data may have been influenced by my own beliefs and background to a certain extent. However, I tried to be objective and tried to remain distant during both the data collection and analysis processes.

During the process of writing this thesis, I have read numerous research articles and books conducted by scholars and researchers extensively for two reasons. One was to learn and understand the rigour, to be thorough, careful, persistent, and exact with the methods and methodology that I embarked on. Second, I sought to ensure the process was trustworthy, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that the research should satisfy five criteria, which I discuss below. I also remained conscious of avoiding plagiarism and tried my best to produce my own story through my own project.

Safeguarding the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants was another principal ethical issue of this study. Prior to the interviews, all research participants read the Explanatory Statement (*Appendix I*), read, and signed the informed Consent Forms (*Appendix II*), assuring confidentiality with their names replaced by pseudonyms.

### 3.8 Trustworthiness

Further, to maintain the credibility of the research, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework on trustworthiness, which concerns the true value of qualitative data, analysis, and interpretation following five criteria: credibility (internal validity), dependability (reliability), confirmability (objectivity), transferability (external validity), and authenticity.

First, Credibility is arguably the most important criterion for assessing a qualitative inquiry's quality and integrity, equivalent to internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth-value of the research findings, to ensure credibility, I used data triangulation by conducting two rounds of interviews, a focus group discussion, and online media resources. Member checking was also applied with the participants – through emails and face-to-face discussions as member checking 'strengthens the data, especially because researcher and respondents look at the data with different eyes' (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). I also revised and reflected on my data collection and analysis procedures to ensure my actions were consistent with their guidelines. Next, dependability includes the aspect of consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which

involves the participant's evaluation of the findings, interpretations, and recommendations. Credibility cannot be attained in the absence of dependability. I read the data multiple times to understand what the data was saying to make sure that I avoided biases to the best of my knowledge.

In addition, I confirmed some aspects of the interview data with the participants when I thought I did not understand or had misunderstood what they told me. I also had a group of fellow PhD researchers with whom I regularly discussed and shared my (deidentified) findings with to ensure that I was interpreting the data correctly. Third, confirmability is concerned with establishing that data patterns and the interpretations of the findings are not the results of the researcher's imagination but are clearly derived from the data, concerning the aspect of neutrality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure confirmability, I kept notes on my interview times, meetings, reflective thoughts, and the emergence of the findings to keep an audit trail of the research path.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants concerning the aspects of applicability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a researcher, my responsibility was to provide a thick description of the research setting, such as where the research took place and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether my findings would be usable in other settings and contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Finally, authenticity is an integral part of ensuring the transparency and quality of qualitative research – how well the researcher conveys the actual feeling of the participants. I tried my best to record in the reflective journal the tone of my participants, their body language, or when they hesitated to answer certain questions, and most importantly, I used participants' raw quotes without changing them to provide some snippets of what the participants actually told me. I also kept in mind the process of critical self-reflection about the researcher's own biases, preferences, preconceptions, etc., and the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and how this relationship can affect participants' answers to questions. In the next section, I briefly explain a few challenges I encountered during the data collection process.

### 3.9 Research Challenges

Researching one's own ethnic group can bring some disadvantages and can sometimes create a sense of mistrust. DeLyser (2001) believes that greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity. I realised that participants expected me to understand some political aspects in the CHT by just saying, "as you know" or "you already know about it" without explaining certain aspects further. I had to ask for clarification, and at times I felt they could not believe that I did not know certain aspects of being someone from the CHT or as a Chakma.

Further, during the first interview, Mrinal was hesitant to make eye contact with me while describing his life in Australia. Although at that time he said he was “perfectly happy” with what he was doing (working in an aged care centre), he also said his wife kept pushing him to pursue a “better career” or go back to studies. This particular incident told me that he was not telling the truth, or rather he did not want me to present him as a failed person. Mrinal made several calls to me after I finished collecting data from him, first, to inform me when he became an Aussie (a dream came true for him and his family). Second, after the focus group discussion, he again called me to say that he had purchased a ‘home’ and now was thinking of going back to his studies. And just recently, he let me know that he has decided to become a nurse as his wife really wanted him to have a “proper” career. Mrinal kept regular contact with me throughout the writing process of this thesis and has kept me informed about his achievements and various aspects of the CHT.

However, apart from these minor challenges, the data collection process went smoothly. I was fortunate to have finished collecting all my data before Covid-19 hit Australia and Melbourne went to a complete lockdown for almost a year. In fact, Chapters 4 and 5 were written during the lockdown period in Melbourne, while working from home. Nothing changed the fact that I received the utmost support and cooperation from the participants and from the Chakma community, without which this research would have been impossible to carry out.

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design of the study. A sound methodology is essential in ensuring trustworthy, reliable as well as falsifiable findings that are open to critical scrutiny. Therefore, the above choices were made based on thoughtful considerations of the specifics of the study. This chapter has outlined the research design by presenting the methodological framework that was employed in this study, including how I selected the participants, the data collection and analysis of the research, ethical considerations as well as trustworthiness in the research.

The next chapter provides a detailed account of the analysis of the data.

# Chapter 4: Analysis of Data and Findings

## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how a group of Chakma immigrants maintain their Chakma identity and culture in diaspora in Melbourne and the role of education in this process. The previous chapter considered the research methodology, the reasons behind selecting the participants, research methods, ethical considerations, and methodological considerations, such as triangulation.

This chapter is designed in three parts: first, the seven participants' individual profiles are presented. This is followed by presenting level one of data analysis through six categories based on how participants answered the core interview questions for this study (see Section 3.5.1 and *Appendix III*). Next, I present how I generated the three major findings that emerged after thematic analysis from level one analysis, and finally, I synthesise the findings in the process of capstone analysis that helped answer the research question.

## 4.2 Participants' Individual Profiles

The seven participants, four Australian citizens, and three permanent residents were all living permanently in Melbourne when data was collected. Except for Binu, the other six participants first came to Australia as students on AusAID scholarships. The participants' ages ranged from 32-58 years. There were four female and three male participants, all of whom had at least a Bachelor's degree from an Australian University. Prior to settling in Australia, they all had worked in various sectors ranging from public, private, and foreign sectors (e.g., UN Aid organisations, such as UNDP; Asian Development Bank, and other foreign aid organisations) in Bangladesh for a minimum of three years. Although after immigration some of them had gone through several phases of struggles in terms of finding suitable and proper employment from months to years, they eventually secured jobs in their studied subject areas. As explained in the previous chapter, I have used pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. The profiles are summarised in Table 4.1.



Table 4.1 Participants Profiles

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Marital status	Number of children	Highest Educational qualification	Length of residency in Australia	Occupation
Gita	Female	48	Married	2	Master	12 years	Engineer
Nanadhon	Male	48	Married	3	Bachelor	12 years	Computer Engineer
Babu	Male	58	Divorced	1	Master	22 years	Medical Doctor
Juni	Female	51	Married	2	Master	13 years	TAFE Teacher
Devi	Female	32	Married	1	Bachelor/studying Masters	6 years	Finance Analyst
Mrinal	Male	43	Married	3	Master/studying nursing	7 years	Aged care centre worker
Binu	Female	36	Married	0	Masters	5 years	Chemist

### Gita

Gita is a 48-year-old chemical engineer, a mother of two girls who has lived in Australia for over 12 years as a student and as an immigrant. She was in Bangladesh working for an NGO for six years until she decided to immigrate to Australia in 2011.

Gita calls herself a weak, slightly superstitious *mon durbal* weak-hearted person because of having felt the effects of multiple deaths in the family. However, she is quite well known to be the saviour of the newly arrived Chakmas in Melbourne; she extends her help to support them mentally and financially. In fact, during the second round interview, while I was interviewing Gita at her home, two female Chakma University students came to visit her. It was on a Saturday; the students came by train to spend some time with Gita and her family. They told me it always feels good to be with Gita because she helped them a lot since they had arrived in Melbourne; she often calls to ask how they are doing, even cooks and delivers food to them.

During both rounds of interviews with her, Gita revealed feeling deeply attached to Bangladesh. I discovered two interesting aspects about Gita: she was the only participant, who had the Bangladeshi national flag hung in the lounge room, and there is a prayer corner with Buddha statues (*Appendix VII*) – she does not leave the house without completing some Buddhist rituals in the morning.

Gita had worked with my sister in Bangladesh, and I knew she has always had excellent academic records and has been working as an engineer in Melbourne. I started the first interview with underlying assumptions that I would meet a very strong, confident woman and hear a successful story. This assumption grew even stronger when she mentioned she had done her undergraduate degree from Swinburne University and Master's degree from Melbourne University. To my surprise, though, she appeared to be a vulnerable person who had gone through severe phases of depression, anxiety, and resettlement struggles. Despite having two university degrees, it took her three years to find a "proper job" after immigration. However, she could not share her vulnerability with anyone in the community, except her doctor; the doctor she deliberately chose from "outside" Chakma and Bangladeshi communities because she was worried a "deshi" doctor might "gossip" about her situation, and she did not want her vulnerability to be known. As I interviewed her, I reflected on my own experiences - 'did I feel like Gita?', or 'what were my thoughts of the first months/years after I migrated here'?

### Nanadhon

Nanadhon, who is the same age as Gita, 48, calls himself a "positive, vibrant person, a dreamer, a lifetime learner and a great observer" who wants to distribute positive energy in the Chakma community both in Australia and in the CHT. He is a computer engineer with excellent academic results throughout life. He came to Melbourne as an undergraduate student and was offered a job in Singapore before even completing the degree. Nanadhon had worked and lived in Singapore and Japan before immigrating to Australia. He always puts family first, and that is the principal reason for him to choose Australia over Singapore and Japan, the countries in which he very much enjoyed living and working. When I asked why he chose Australia to settle, Nanadhon explained,

*"I didn't want to have a family in Japan because there's very little family life and the children have to be extremely busy with studies, more than I could imagine – they don't get any childhood, in my opinion. I was a permanent resident in Singapore but there is no concept of a family. You might know Singapore is very picky when it comes to granting permanent residency to outsiders. I got one because I was contributing to their economy but I wouldn't have been able to bring my brother or sisters or my mother, only my wife. Australia is a country where I could bring everyone eventually".*

Nanadhon has three sisters and a brother; he sponsored all three sisters and his mother, who are all Australian citizens now. His brother did not want to leave Bangladesh, and he has no contact with the father for internal family reasons. During both interviews, Nanadhon only mentioned his father once when talking about his family education background. Nanadhon is a father of three children; the son

is 14, and the daughters are 11 and 10. He calls himself a hands-on dad, always trying to be actively involved in many activities children are parts of, such as playing musical instruments, singing, and playing sports with them.

### Babu

Babu is one of the earliest immigrants among the Chakmas in Australia who has lived predominantly in Melbourne for over 26 years. A medical doctor, in his late 50s, he is the father of a 23-year-old daughter and divorced. Babu is the only participant who openly criticised some of the social and political aspects in the CHT. I asked him about the ongoing political unrest with the assumption that he would blame it on the Bengali settlers or the army personnel as most other participants did. Surprisingly, he stated that the Chakmas need to be responsible for their own actions by stopping this never-ending blame game. During both interviews, Babu, a devout Buddhist, emphasised that empathy, compassion, and kindness are the keys to become a better person, and the *Jummas* should practise these in life.

Buddhism plays a very strong part in Babu's life. He talked about Buddhism throughout the interviews and often quoted verses from the Tripitaka. He started an initiative of building a Bangladeshi Buddhist *Keyang* temple two years ago and invited me to attend the information/fundraising event after the first interview. I observed that the other Chakmas and the Baruas (Bengali Buddhists) that were present at the event spoke very respectfully to Babu and seemed to position him as a pioneer in decision-making. He in turn was very respectful to the elders present there, making *salam* by touching their feet and spoke kindly with a polite demeanour. He also seems to be generous with donating money to several organisations. At the Buddhist temple information session, Babu donated \$20,000.

### Devi

Devi is the youngest of all seven participants in this study. She is 32 years old, an accountant, married, and has a four-year-old son. Devi described herself as a strong and outspoken person who does not hesitate to voice out her beliefs and is particularly conscious about raising awareness of women's position in the Chakma society and in Bangladesh as a whole. Devi first came to Melbourne to study a Bachelor in Business and Commerce in 2007. As part of the AusAID scholarship condition, like others, she had to return home in 2010 and immigrated to Australia five years later in 2015. She was eagerly waiting to become an Australian citizen when I interviewed her.

Devi was very conscious of her privileged status. A number of times during the interviews, she mentioned the word "privileged" because she comes from a fourth-generation university-educated family. She is also the only participant with parents with Master's degrees: the father held a prestigious job, and the mother is the first woman in Bangladesh to have established a school for

disabled children as Devi has an autistic brother. In fact, her mother won a national award for her contribution to society. Devi grew up in Dhaka and would visit Rangamati once a year during the school holidays. Devi talks about feeling left out and different, being the only *nak boncha* flat nose girl in the entire Bengali majority school she went to for 12 years. Growing up in Dhaka seemed to have left Devi with a complex relationship with Bangladesh, which will be explained in detail later in the chapter.

Currently, Devi is studying to become a Chartered Accountant so that she can have a better career. Her aspiration for knowledge is commendable. She is an active advocate for women's empowerment and a strong critic of patriarchy, the Bangladeshi government, and the political situation in the CHT. She is also very active on Facebook, shares posts that are supposed to raise awareness about multiple issues, for example, discrimination against women, body shaming, and political oppression issues and so on.

### Mrinal

Mrinal, a father of three, first came to Australia in 1995 to study a Bachelor of Computer Science. However, he could not continue with the course for several reasons. First, he had little to no interest in the subject because he did not choose to study it; his parents had chosen it for him. Second, Mrinal found it challenging to adjust to the study load mainly for the reason that he was not confident in his English skills. Finally, adjusting to the Australian culture and way of life was not suitable for Mrinal. He was extremely homesick because he had never lived without family.

Mrinal went back to Bangladesh four years later in 1999 without the Bachelor's degree he came to study, but with an Advanced Diploma in Business from another university; for this, he has remained grateful to AusAID, which gave him the chance not to return to Bangladesh *khali haate* empty handed. Subsequently, Mrinal completed a Bachelor of Honours and Master's in Business Administration (MBA) in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Interestingly, Mrinal did not want to study any of the above degrees; he did so because of his parents, particularly his mother, who would nag him and unfavourably compared his lack of achievements to his friends who had completed Master's degrees, and some of whom had returned to Bangladesh with foreign degrees. Mrinal described his educational qualifications with a reluctant tone, something he did not like to discuss with others. Unfortunately, after immigration, he failed to secure a good job. Mrinal, with his wife and two sons, came to Adelaide on a temporary residency visa, on the condition that they would survive two years without any help from the Australian government. Out of frustration with not getting a job, he studied a Certificate IV in Aged Care. Yet again, he failed to secure employment. Instead, his wife decided to do the same certificate, and she was hired soon afterwards. Mrinal said,

*“I’ve had enough of studying. I think I’m a really unlucky person in selecting my study subjects. I could only use my degrees in Bangladesh for a few years because I was more fluent in English than other candidates were, because I lived in Melbourne for four years and NGOs need employees with good English. But in Adelaide, nothing worked for me. So we decided to move to Melbourne”.*

During the first interview, Mrinal looked uncomfortable talking about his life in Melbourne. Although he said he is happy that he has given a safer life to his children, he did not make eye contact with me the whole time. Mrinal became an Australian citizen two months after our first interview and he called me to give the “best news in his life”. Finally, his dream came true as he does not need to worry about his children’s future. Almost six months later, Mrinal called me again, this time to tell me that he had purchased a home. Mrinal kept informing me if there was some good news. He finally decided to study nursing - now that they are “Aussies”, he will get government support to study. Because of his several encounters with violent acts (which I discuss later in this chapter), he seems to carry a rather bitter feeling towards Bangladesh.

### Juni

Juni has lived in Australia for nearly 13 years. First, she came on AusAID to study a Master in Business Management in 2002, while she had been working for the Bangladeshi government as a magistrate, one of the most competitive jobs to get in the country. Like other participants, Juni also had an excellent academic record throughout her life. Her social status in the Chakma society was formidable because of the job she had.

Juni is 51 years old, married with two adult daughters. Like Devi, Juni also comes from a highly educated family. Her father was an engineer who worked for the government and often got transferred to other districts; Juni and her brother had moved around Bangladesh almost every two to three years. As Juni explained,

*“By the time I finished high school I had been to so many districts in Bangladesh and studied in so many different schools that I had learnt many dialects of Bengali and had seen various cultures within the country”.*

She said moving around has had a profound impact on her personality. Most of the time, she felt isolated and alone, because she looked different from others (Bengalis) and was always the centre of the attention as her classmates would see a *Chinese* for the first time in their life. Their curiosity would make her uncomfortable and sometimes upset. However, there was also another side of these experiences that made her focus on studies, made her more independent and strong. She also believes that eventually, because of those experiences, it was easy for her to decide to immigrate.

Currently, Juni teaches a course called Cert IV in Childcare at a TAFE (Technical And Further Education) college. She feels happy to have secured this job after some initial struggle. Her work experience in Bangladesh in both public and private sectors and an Australian degree had no value when she applied for jobs after immigration. She has done a few certificate courses suggested by fellow Bangladeshis (mainly Bengali friends) over the years in the hope of securing a job. As she says,

*“I have done these short courses, worked really hard, enrolled in government funded courses just to get a job, to earn money. My age was a big challenge to start from the bottom level and I had such a prestigious job in Bangladesh! It’s hard to degrade yourself you know...but I’m happy where I’m now. If I was career oriented I wouldn’t have come to Australia in the first place”.*

### Binu

Binu is the only participant in this study who did not come to Melbourne on an AusAID scholarship. She was sponsored by her aunt as she qualified to apply for immigration on a temporary resident visa as a Chemist. She is also the only person to have immigrated single. However, Binu went to get married two years after she was granted a permanent residency visa. Her husband joined her on a spouse visa six months later.

While other participants talked about struggles during the settling process, Binu said she had an easy ride because she stayed with her aunt until she found a job. She did not feel lonely because aunty and her family have always been supportive and helped her in every way possible to make her feel at home. Binu remains grateful to her aunt’s family for making her settlement process easy.

Binu is also grateful to the Bengali man who offered her current job after finding her on LinkedIn, a website where professionals upload and update their profiles. This Bengali person hired her without hesitation, trusted her just because she was a *deshi bon* a native sister, for which she remains ever grateful and tries to keep that trust. Binu purchased a house close to her aunt and feels very happy that she has achieved all these in five years’ time.

Binu is 36, trying to settle down properly, supporting her husband, who is planning to start a course so that he can get a good job. Binu says she feels pressured because almost all of her classmates in Bangladesh and in other countries have one or two children. However, she feels relieved that she is not living in Bangladesh; people would ask her when she would have children. She says,

*“At least that social pressure is not here. Chakmas here understand our struggle, without any helping hand, we have to manage everything in a family, cooking, cleaning, washing, groceries and you have to invite people when you get invited. Life is not easy”.*

Now that the participants of this study have been introduced, in the next section, I present the first or foundational analysis that was based on six core categories in my two rounds of semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussion.

### 4.3 Level One: Foundational Analysis

While I asked different follow-up questions depending on the participant's responses, the core interests consisted of the following:

- 1) The importance of education while they were growing up;
- 2) Reasons for immigration to Australia and settlement processes;
- 3) Activities they are currently involved in as a Chakma community;
- 4) Frequency of visit to the CHT and keeping in touch with family and friends back home;
- 5) Whether, why, and how they keep contact with diasporic Chakmas in other countries; and
- 6) Their thoughts about the future of the CHT and its people.

#### 4.3.1 The Importance of Education while Growing up

Although six out of the seven participants first came to Australia on AusAID scholarships, I wanted to understand the beginning of their educational journey – in what kind of environment they grew up, whether they were encouraged by family and the surrounding people, the community and above all, the perceived value of education in their lives. One thing appeared to be common for all the participants: education was the first priority for as long as they could remember. However, their experience of growing up as minorities varied significantly and primary and high school experiences seem to have shaped greatly who they have become. All seven of them showed immense respect and gratefulness to their families. Gita, for example, says,

*“Education is the main reason in the CHT to achieve their goals. I believe all children have the potential to become successful, but only those who are encouraged and supported by the family get the environment [where they] can achieve their goals. My father was a high school teacher, and he guided his children in a really good way that helped us in achieving good results”.*

Gita's secondary school final exam results were one of the best in the CHT region that year, so she was able to enrol at a well-reputed college in Dhaka and later the best-known university for engineering, which eventually led her to apply for the AusAID scholarships. She is also the only person among the participants who had been awarded scholarships for both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees

in Australia. As Gita talks about her educational experiences, she illustrates that she had always aspired for good results partly because her sisters were all high achievers and there was hidden pressure to do well as the youngest in the family. Her family had a very good “teacher family” reputation in the community because of her father, so that it was expected she would become “someone” in the future. Gita narrates that throughout her life, she ran after good results, as she believed “there was no other way. I didn’t hear of anyone who had a good life without a good job and to get a good job you had to have good results from a good university”. She believes, because of education, she has been able to fulfil many of her dreams in life.

Similar to Gita, Nanadhon too was able to enrol at a highly competitive college after his brilliant HSC results. He says, “I did well throughout my education because from a young age I knew the importance of it”. This is how he described the importance of education in life,

*“Education was everything. I mean, if you look at the future, there’s nothing else to do unless you actually gained some qualifications through education. We knew that there wasn’t much you could do without being educated. So, it was always the number one priority for my siblings and me over anything else”.*

Although he was very good at debating and music, he was not encouraged to pursue them; rather, his family greatly encouraged him to focus on studies to become successful in the future. Because without good results, he would not be able to get admitted at a well-reputed university, and in Bangladesh, a degree from a well-known university brings both prestige and status for better employment opportunities after graduation.

Babu, as long as he remembers, knew that he would become a doctor to help people, and for that, he had always studied hard. It was his father’s dream that Babu would become a doctor. Like in many other countries, a medical doctor brings prestige and status to Chakma society. Babu was emotional talking about his father’s death, which seemed to have left a huge impact on his life and a wish to be of help to the poor.

*“My father was a brilliant student, and he was the foundation of my education; he helped me with all the subjects. He wanted to be a doctor, but he couldn’t because he had to take charge of the family when my grandfather passed away suddenly. But he would always remind me of his wish to become a doctor, so I was inspired from a very young age that I will become a doctor to help other people”.*

It seems helping other people has since become an important part of Babu’s life. He sponsors several students from poor families in Bangladesh who cannot afford to go to school or university. He also



regularly donates money to a few charity organisations both in Bangladesh and in Australia. He strongly believes both formal education (getting degrees and certificates) and social and cultural education (being kind, respecting others) are equally important to live harmoniously. He illustrates his position as a doctor,

*“My commitment to the community and my position as a doctor have helped me to help others, and I feel morally obliged to help the disadvantaged. In that sense, I try to help Bangladeshis; whether they are Muslims or Hindus, if someone is in need of help, I try my best. I’m a doctor, but above all, I’m a human being. I don’t see the religion or skin colour of people as a doctor, I have to treat everyone equally, and I try to do that in my social/private /personal life too”.*

It seems Babu’s socio-economic status as a doctor with a comfortable life in Melbourne gives him the advantage of helping others. He also seemed to be quite aware of his privileged status, not just in relation to other Chakmas but also to others in the Australian society at large. While it is one thing wanting to help others without having disposable money, it is challenging to provide monetary help. During the second interview, it came up that Babu has a few investment properties in Melbourne and Sydney and is in possession of expensive cars.

In both interviews, Juni, a mother of two adult daughters, repeatedly mentioned she would not accept it if her daughters did not go to university like “many Aussie kids do”. She says, “I’ve always reminded them I’ve come here for them, what I left behind, guided them to take education seriously, so they were very aware of the parents’ expectations which were they must go to university”. This seems to be deeply rooted in what she said next about the importance of education she has learnt from family. Juni and her brother *never* thought of not going to university, as it was an established concept - instilled in them that they must complete at least a Master’s degree. Juni wants her daughters to aspire high in life; while she wants them to be happy, they must pursue a successful career in whatever they choose to be. Similar to Gita, Juni too wants her daughters to be strong, powerful, decisive, and eventually contribute to the betterment of the Chakma society.

Mrinal describes himself to have always been a good student. His parents guided and supported him enormously; as a result, he stood first in the SSC exam in Khagrachhari district. He explains the supportive parents in an emotional manner,

*“My parents have highly encouraged and supported us in every possible way to do well at school by giving us private tuition and extra support outside school. Because we knew that without higher education, there will be no good living hood, especially in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, they gave education the highest priority”.*

Despite being supportive, Mrinal's parents did not allow him to select the subjects that he wanted to study. Instead, his parents insisted on continuing to study science subjects as "they thought science subjects were much better for a good career, studying Arts subjects weren't considered good". Mrinal felt resentful about having to follow his parents' advice, so he decided to challenge himself to do well in the university entry exam and stood first in the admission test at Jahangirnagar University to study Government and Political Science. However, just a few months later, he was awarded the AusAID scholarship. Again his parents chose the subject he was going to study. He regrets not continuing at the university, "Now I think, if I had stayed studying at JU, I would probably become a Uni professor, it's my fate I guess. I could have even appeared on various TV channels as a famous professor, haha!".

Mrinal attributed to fate these experiences of not being able to choose what he wanted to. He speaks about fate and destiny; fate had brought him to Australia and working at an aged care centre was "something was written in my fate". Mrinal showed a lack of confidence about his capabilities to choose what he wants in his life. Now that he is in Melbourne, his wife seems to make most of the decisions just as his parents did.

Unlike Mrinal, Devi is a confident and determined woman - very vocal about what she wants and follows a plan to achieve her goals. Her experience of school was very different from others. As she grew up in Dhaka, she did not have a supportive Chakma community, "only my family and occasional meetups with other Chakma families were there to feel supportive," she says. Devi explained that although she comes from a highly privileged and educated family, growing up in Dhaka was not at all easy for her. She went to an all-girls school where she was the only Chakma girl in the entire school, and it was very hard for her to fit in. She illustrates that she faced racism from her classmates although they were young. Devi continues,

*"There was subtle racism even from the teachers: I remember one of my primary teachers asked me, 'oh what do you eat at home?' Back then, I didn't understand. I said yea, we eat chicken, fish, this and that and she asked, something else? Something else? And I said no, nothing else".*

Now she understands the teacher was trying to see if she ate frogs and snakes as many people thought Chakmas ate insects and cockroaches and things that Bengali people do not eat. Growing up in Dhaka, even going to a market was challenging for her because people would say things like, "hey, Chinese, Chinku and make weird noises. So, growing up in Dhaka, I faced racism almost every day – it was part of our everyday life. It wasn't like one or two incidents, and it happened on a regular basis", Devi says.

Like Juni, Devi believes these experiences have made her a strong person. Because of these experiences of discrimination and racism, she had taken up dancing as a way of relieving anger, determined to be the best dancer at school. Her determination paid off, making her included in the “cool group” of girls whom everyone respected because these cool girls were the most talented bunch. At some point, she had started bullying others by taking advantage of her “fair skin”. She would call them “niggers, and because of being called horrible names and because they made me feel so different, I think I invented a defence mechanism or a coping mechanism from a young age”. She regrets doing this but defends her action by saying, “I was bullied so much because of being a Chakma that I invented my own way of protecting myself, a reverse racism technique to cope with the situations”. She admits that it was toxic behaviour looking back to her school years, but she also understands why she did it.

Devi says she can relate her experiences with those of other people that she has read about. She is curious about the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as she understands the challenges and struggles they have been and are still going through. She takes an active interest to learn about these communities to have a better understanding of their culture.

Unlike others, Binu did not talk much about her educational experiences or having experienced pressure or discrimination at school, except for the fact that she always knew she would go to a good university. However, just like the other six, Binu knew that she would complete a Master's degree as she said, “I never thought of not going to university because all my aunties have done Master's, it was very obvious to me”. She believes her life has been “pretty easy compared to her mother or her aunts who have built the platform” for her, and she has had a comfortable life both in Bangladesh and in Melbourne.

#### 4.3.2 Reasons for Immigration to Australia and Settlement Processes

Generally speaking, the main reason for immigration that everyone pointed out was safety. Being exposed to the Australian egalitarian society and culture while studying in Australia made them realise the possibility of gaining a safer, better future. I noticed that while male participants predominantly talked about the political unrest in the CHT, women stated security and freedom as being primary reasons for immigration. Except for Babu, the other participants believed they would not have left “my people” or the CHT had they not been exposed to “an alternative life” that they had experienced when they came to study on AusAID scholarships.

Juni, for instance, says she realised her daughters were a lot happier and full of life right after they had started living in Melbourne. She also felt very comfortable being a Chakma woman in Melbourne because there were so many people who looked *just* like her. The social pressure of looking *different*

was not there anymore. In a multicultural country, she was “just like another Asian”. She continues, saying the feeling of being a minority does not exist here, and she felt “liberated”.

*“I felt very safe for my daughters, which you don’t really feel in CHT. I remembered my own childhood – there were so many restrictions, especially during my adolescent and teen years. My mom was always worried about my safety, and even when I went to school, there was someone to protect me if something did happen to me. Although it was only for two years, I could compare the childhood my daughters had in Rangamati and here in Melbourne. I decided then and there that I would have to come back to Melbourne for my daughters. I was exposed to something better, and I could avail it, and believe me, it wasn’t for me or for my husband. It was for the girls. I wanted them to grow up with freedom.”*

However, it was not all “a smooth ride” after immigration, a rather “bumpy road” – this time, she was not on a scholarship. She elaborates her story: “just like many immigrants, my initial stage was full of challenges, struggles, disappointments and sometimes frustrations”. However, she is content with her current job and insists she has never regretted her decision to settle in Australia.

Gita reveals similar reasons for the migration and settlement process. While, unlike Juni, Gita never planned to return to Australia to live permanently, she decided it much later after becoming a mother of her two daughters. At the time she applied for permanent residency, she was living and working at Rangamati. Unlike Juni, Gita did not have a secure job; she admits two Australian degrees helped her “tremendously” getting a job at a UNDP project; she had experienced anxiety multiple times because these projects were solely dependent on the Bangladeshi government’s wish. The government was “deciding not to allow the NGOs to work in the CHT, and we were all in a situation like what’s going to happen to us? I had a family with two kids”. Historically the Bangladeshi government often puts an embargo on foreigners from entering the CHT because Gita believes people in power are scared that these foreign aided agencies will reveal the truth, the real conditions of the people. Therefore, whether the government will allow the NGOs to operate in the CHT is dependent on the political situations, or occurrences of communal violence. Gita decided to try out her luck,

*“I just didn’t want to feel insecure about the future. Because I knew that even if I lose a job in Australia, there would be some jobs that I could do . . . which as you’d know is not the case in BD. Even without doing anything, I’d get some money from the Govt. for my babies. So those were in my thoughts. I searched about family support from Centre link. Also, I thought my girls will grow up soon. Why don’t I try to give them a better life? You know, girls in Bangladesh grow up with too many restrictions, so I was*

*thinking about their future, and I was 38. I needed to hurry up, and you lose points after 40. Luckily, I got PR within 3 months”.*

Similar to Juni, Gita illustrated her experience of the first year in Melbourne as being simply miserable. Gita became emotional and almost in tears, describing her mental condition when she realised that she had actually left her country, Bangladesh.

*“I had never thought of leaving BD. It was my country, and I thought I will always live there with my family, friends, and my relatives. I thought I would come or go to any other country in the world as a visitor but not to live in a foreign country permanently. But I took the decision to come and finally I came, and the situation was different. First of all, I wasn’t feeling well enough mentally, physically, and overall, I wasn’t feeling good about anything. The first thing that struck me was I was feeling conflicted within myself”.*

She started feeling like a *beiman* traitor, guilty of leaving her ailing parents behind; it took over her “sane mind,” realising she might not see them again. She had gone through many sleepless nights, fearing receiving a phone call with some “dreadful news”. Not getting a job also contributed to the mental health that had strongly affected her “confidence level”. She had expected to be employed “pretty soon” because of having two Australian degrees from two “very good universities” and having worked for UNDP. She elaborates, “6/7 months were gone with two little babies, and they were struggling with their language too in a changed environment”. Then she says, these experiences have made her stronger, prepared her for the future that she has been able to build.

For both Binu and Devi, security and freedom were the principal pull factors in deciding to immigrate to Australia. Although Binu had no experience of living here, she was highly encouraged to select Australia for her future home; because of the many positive benefits Melbourne had offered to her aunt. At the same time, many other Chakmas had promoted Melbourne in a very positive image, and she believes it did not disappoint her in any way. She reveals feeling “a lot safer as a woman and not being judged by how she looks or what she wears gives her a sense of freedom”. As mentioned earlier, Binu did not have to go through many challenging experiences because of her aunt and her family.

Devi, on the other hand, experienced some “tough times” after returning to Bangladesh in 2009. She passionately looked for a job only to realise that “employers don’t have a very respectable view towards women, it’s worse for the minority women”. She continues that as a minority woman, she has experienced “sexism, sexist views from men and racial discrimination from both genders”. Therefore, Devi decided to work in Dhaka in an international organisation where she felt

comparatively comfortable. The employees “held more modern and secular views compared to other national organisations. Although going to the banking sector was never a plan”.

Devi’s next narrative sums up succinctly why she wanted to leave Bangladesh,

*“When I first came to Monash to study, I really enjoyed the freedom we have here. I can travel around anytime, anywhere that I want to. If there’s any trouble, triple zero is just one call away, so it’s the whole social security system. And then, of course, nobody was asking me why you’re outside home so late. The crime rate is so much less than Bangladesh –the sense of freedom and security are why I came back”.*

After returning to Bangladesh, she felt “suffocated with too many restrictions”. Her mother would get really worried if she did not get home “before daylight ends”. She could not stay outside once it got dark. “Even after I got married, had my kid, I still didn’t feel safe; back in my mind, I guess I always compared how I had felt in Melbourne and what I was missing out. So I often wished to return”. Because she had been exposed to the secure life, she knew she could have a much better life; she says, “I’m glad that everything worked out well and I managed to come back here”. She also found employment in a bank soon after immigration.

The reasons for the three male participants were somewhat similar to the female participants: they wanted to live and bring up their children in a safer and stable environment by availing themselves of the opportunities they had. However, they emphasised political unrest, discrimination, oppression, and recurring communal violence in the CHT. Mrinal among the three particularly showed strong concern about the situation, saying, “there is no guarantee of life there, if you’re in the wrong place at the wrong time, you might get killed. It’s like going out holding your life in your palm”. Mrinal had experienced several violent acts committed by the settlers and the army at Khagrachhari that made him bitter towards the Bangladesh government and its treatment of the minorities. However, he stressed that it is not the people, but the “dirty politics” that make *Jumma* people’s lives miserable; Babu echoes this by saying, “We had a good life but not security”.

In addition to having a safe and secure life, Babu and Nanadhon say they wanted to give their children a “better education” that they experienced as students in Melbourne. Babu points out, the “Education system in Bangladesh is about reproducing; same things are done again and again. It doesn’t prepare you for the tough job market, and I wanted to give that to my daughter”. To Nanadhon, being treated with “respect even as a student” in a friendly manner was a key factor in his doing very well during his undergraduate studies in Melbourne, which is one of the reasons he wanted to settle down in Australia.

All three male participants also share further similarities in their decision to immigrate to Australia; families are always the first priority, and they have been trying to sponsor their family members and encouraging relatives to leave the CHT, believing that Chakmas need to aspire to better education. Higher degrees from Australia or other first world countries would generate better intellectuals, academics in the community, a critical aspect of reaching an international audience, because, without international pressure, it would be simply as Babu puts it, “impossible to pressurise the Bangladeshi government to give due recognition that the Adivasi people deserve”. Babu mentions some of his *Jumma* writer friends that I quote in this study (such as Tripura, 2010, 2013; B. Chakma, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2018) and Kabita Chakma, whose poem I used in my first chapter, or Professor Amit Chakma, the Vice-Chancellor of Western University, Perth, who are working and contributing towards a global awareness of the *Jummas* and the other Adivasi peoples in Bangladesh.

#### 4.3.3 Staying Chakma in Melbourne – the Role of Community

The Chakmas in Melbourne believe it is extremely important to keep connected with each other to move forward as a small community. In doing so, they meet frequently on several platforms: as a community, within families, and individually. All seven participants greatly emphasised “keeping in touch on a regular basis”. Babu puts it this way, “For small communities like us, it’s extremely important to have gatherings, sharing and teaching the next generation how we do things – our practices, traditions, etc.” As a doctor, Babu believes,

*“Social interaction is very important for mental wellbeing. And it’s even more important for a small group like us because you speak the same language, same cuisine, food and cooking style, jokes. These types of interactions help us to overcome homesickness, mental stress or discuss important issues like what is happening in CHT and whether we could do something for people back home.”*

Gita holds similar views about the importance of social gatherings, particularly when she was going through depression in the initial stage of settling down, the days she refers to as “bad times” when she wanted to meet and see them every day because she felt “most comfortable being with them. The gaps /longing for my people, I was trying to fill that with them”. She illustrates that with time, meetings have become infrequent from weekly to fortnightly and sometimes even less. She admits other Chakmas’ company and supports “directly or indirectly” helped her overcome the bad days. For Nanadhon, these gatherings are not tied up to mental well-being or meet-ups only. For him, these gatherings are for two main factors: “number one is identity - who am I? Number two is to see whether we can do something for back home collectively for the community that we left behind”.

However, for Devi and Binu, meeting others that frequently is not very important. Devi illustrates that it is both important and not very important. It is important because her son gets an opportunity to be amongst the kids from the community, “it is comforting to be able to talk in your mother tongue and share the same jokes and food”. But sometimes it is less important because her family is still in such a struggling stage,

*“Our priorities are to continue, if not improve our life, to get better jobs and settle down well, sending our son to the best school possible. So, we want to focus more on achieving these things. Sometimes I feel like going to a fellow Chakma’s house every weekend is a waste of time when we are not focusing on ourselves”.*

She continues that these gatherings could be a distraction, but she still wants to be in contact with them but not constantly, not every weekend, probably once a month. Apart from these weekly, monthly, or fortnightly gatherings, the entire community comes together for *Bizu*, usually by renting a large property far away from the city, and sometimes *Bizu* is celebrated with interstate and international visitors. This is also an occasion when they bring in *Jumma* artists and performers from the CHT, as Gita says, “One way of trying to keep the kids connected to their roots”.

As individuals, they also practise certain traditions and rituals at home; in this regard, Gita seems to take it very seriously to show her daughters what it means to be a Chakma, such as, every morning, Gita would offer food and water to Buddha and pray. She insists her daughters just follow what she does with the hope that they will eventually start practising these customs when they grow up. She also deliberately uses Chakma words and never translates them to English, especially with cooking ingredients, utensils, and food items, such as “*hurbo, guduye, ehra, morich battye, hebang, taba tone* (see Glossary). In a similar manner, Mrinal engages his three children in listening to Chakma music, telling them Chakma folklore,

*“We try to do as much as we can. We take them to temples on the eve of Buddha Purnima, Maghi Purnima, or Kathin Chibor Dana. When our Keyang will be built, it’s going to be even better because that will be our own way of doing things”.*

Gita revealed an interesting fact - after she had purchased their house in a south-eastern suburb, seven other Chakma families, including Mrinal, purchased houses in the same area within a five to ten-minute drive that gave them a sense of, “as if we are living in Rangamati or Khagrachhari, we can drop by anytime or share food if one of us cooks authentic food”. Mrinal is particularly happy about this because his parents-in-law, who are living with them permanently, often feel lonely and homesick; they can visit other families or talk to them.



An important fact that came up during interviews and focus group discussion was whether they feel any shift in their Chakmaness. The answers varied considerably. While they all said their first and main identity would always remain Chakma, it varied *how* they relate to Bangladesh and Australia. Gita, Juni, Binu, and Babu are happy to be referred to as Bangladeshis; as Babu says, “How can I be a Chakma without mentioning Bangladesh? That is where I was born, and my people are still there”. Similarly, Gita and Binu feel a strong connection to Bangladesh: Bengali is the language they feel comfortable in speaking and writing, not in English. Juni believes Bangladesh will always be a part of her identity. She loves wearing sarees as much as she loves wearing *pinon hadi*, Chakma women’s traditional attire. Besides, she loves being in Bangladesh with relatives and friends. It is the politics that has inserted division, but most of her good friends are Bengalis, every time she visits Bangladesh, her high school and university friends throw parties just for her, buy expensive presents, and so on. She believes this type of connectedness will never grow with the Australians, no matter how long she lives in the country.

Devi and Mrinal, on the other hand, do not want to be related to Bangladesh in the future. They want to be recognised as Australian Chakma. Mrinal believes Bangladesh has never treated him right. For him, trusting Bengalis is not easy even in Australia, and he always stays vigilant. Devi says, “*Bangladesh is gradually fading from my world. I don’t think I will want others to know that I come from that country*”. Nanadhon is rather indifferent about his relationship with Bangladesh. Because he has spent many years in other countries, he seems to have only a mild fondness for Bangladesh. He thinks we live in a globalised world, “why put these boundaries with country names? I like to think of myself as a global citizen. Well, carrying an Australian passport is a lot better than a green passport, but I don’t really think too much about these things”. Colloquially, a green passport refers to being weak with travel restrictions to many countries and associated with Islam.

#### 4.3.4 Reasons for and Ways of Keeping in Touch with the CHT

Similar to meeting regularly, keeping regular, ongoing contact with the CHT is incredibly important for the participants. They feel fortunate to live in a technologically advanced, globalised world that provides facilities to maintain relationships with family and friends no matter where they live. They all make regular phone calls, video chats from every day to once a week. However, visiting the CHT physically is the best way to keep in contact with the people and the community, showing the children “first hand” their roots, lifestyle, and the care and “*ador* endearing affection” they are missing from relatives here.

There were two distinct groups among the participants with regard to frequency of visiting Bangladesh that seem to depend on economic solvency and residency status. In the first group were Babu, Juni,

Gita, and Nanadhon, who were Australian citizens with tenured jobs when I interviewed them. Nanadhon's primary intention of visiting Khagrachhari and Rangamati is predominantly to show the children "who we are, our people, tradition, and culture". So, they try to engage the children in various activities, such as cooking *pidey* a type of rice cake. In the past, his children did not enjoy the visits, but in the last few years, he observed they could converse or initiate conversations among peers and made some good friends. They were even teaching Chakma and English to each other. All these happened because Nanadhon has taken the children to the CHT every year in the last three years, and he wishes to continue developing the bond more strongly through more frequent visits.

Gita's thoughts are almost identical to Nanadhon's regarding taking her daughters to Rangamati and Khagrachhari. She flies to Bangladesh every year for two specific reasons; one is to see the family member that she had left behind, as it appears she still carries that sense of a *beiman* (see Section 4.2.2) and the other reason is to involve the daughters in the cultural and religious activities for which she plans ahead of time and explains, "even if I have to *udhor* borrow money from the Jummas here, I must go".

On the other hand, Devi, Mrinal, and Binu were still waiting for their citizenship to be granted after fulfilling all the requirements, such as staying in Australia for a certain period. Mrinal talks to his family almost every day because his parents miss the children, and they are afraid that they will not know who their grandparents are. Mrinal and his wife want their three children to grow a strong bond with *nanu* grandmother and *azu* grandfather. Since they moved to Australia, Mrinal's parents came to visit them once while his parents-in-law are more frequent visitors. Similar to Mrinal, Devi's mother visited them once, and they have not been to Bangladesh in four years. Binu went to Bangladesh once to get married, and since then, her mother came to visit once.

Flying to Bangladesh with family is extremely expensive, and therefore, for some, it is a better option to bring the grandparents so that they can see what type of lifestyle the Chakmas have in Australia. The most important reason for having the elderly in the community is to learn several aspects of doing things in the "correct way" as Gita, Babu, and Juni explain. There are cultural and religious elements that are usually performed by the elderly, such as organising a religious ritual of a death anniversary of a parent, and there are certain rules to be followed. Juni brought her mother to do this for her father's death anniversary and invited most people to her house, where Babu and Gita were present to learn the rituals.

All three of the latter group do not want to delay the process of becoming Australian citizens. There seems to be another reason why they feel it is important to go to Bangladesh with an "Aussie passport", namely, safety and security while in Bangladesh or if they go to other countries. The Australian

government will take care of bringing them back safely if there is a natural disaster or if a critical situation arises. Mrinal, in this context, expresses his sad opinion that “we were born in a country where its citizens don’t know that we are from the same country” as he was often treated as a foreigner while he was working with other foreigners for a UN project at Khagrachhari. He says it is the sad truth that the birth country cannot give him “*jiboner nirapotta* safety for life”.

For Devi and Mrinal, getting an Australian passport is “the ultimate goal to security” that they have come for, which will bring “certain rights” to their lives, and finally, with voting rights, would give them a chance to contribute in selecting local representatives. They both see it as a “way of giving back” to the country that has given them so much.

However, some participants feel that Australia will never be their “true home” for a number of reasons. As first-generation migrants, they are aware that complete integration in society is neither possible nor desirable. It is not possible because they brought in certain cultural values and beliefs, norms, traditions, social and religious education that they grew up with; not desirable since they should hold on to those values to pass on to the subsequent generations. They seem to feel responsible to sustain Chakmaness, although the small number of Chakmas adds additional pressure to do so. However, they also admit that whether they want or not, they are slowly integrating into Australian society by observing Christmas, having regular “barbies”, watching footy, and so on.

#### 4.3.5 Keeping in Touch with Other Diasporic Chakmas

All seven participants strongly advocate for the Chakmas outside the CHT to keep close connection with each other for two specific reasons: firstly, to keep the Chakmaness “alive” and secondly, to be able to do something for the people back home as a “global community”. Babu and Nanadhon particularly placed much emphasis on “coming together” to exercise pressure on the Bangladeshi government for the betterment of the *Jumma* people and the development of the CHT. They believe that creating employment opportunities for the *Jummas* will enhance their survival capacity on the one hand and on the other hand, the Chakmas would be sustained if they could liaise with “powerful, developed Western governments” and make foreign people aware of the situation in the CHT.

Babu seems to believe he has certain responsibilities towards the Chakmas both here and in the CHT. This could be because he is one of the earliest immigrants among Chakmas in Melbourne and therefore, one of the oldest members; most people look up to him when it comes to making decisions about certain things. He takes multiple initiatives personally and monetarily. His current project is getting Buddhists (Chakmas, Marmas, and Baruas) involved in building the Bangladeshi *Keyang* Buddhist temple. He organises community meetings and liaises with diasporic Bangladeshi Buddhists in the US, UK, and other countries. During the focus group discussion, Babu said, “I see this *keyang* as

a very important source of keeping our Chakma culture alive, it doesn't necessarily mean it's for praying or only doing religious things; we are most probably even not going to have a *Bhante* monk". He continues emphasising the importance of those parents who come to visit their children, who cannot pray in Vietnamese or Chinese *keyangs* because of the language barrier.

Juni gives an example of connecting Chakmas within Australia and overseas. A Chakma wedding took place in Sydney two years ago, where almost all Chakmas in Australia and many from other countries were invited - this was the first time for many children to have witnessed a Chakma wedding. She believes it was "invigorating" to see how her daughters and other children were curious about the process. I wrote this comment when I was analysing Juni's interview 'it appears that Juni is hopeful for her daughters to find suitable partners if these types of programs are held regularly'.

The participants also revealed that whenever there is communal violence or a natural disaster occurs, they come together as a global community either to raise money or to hold protests internationally, usually in front of the parliament houses or Bangladeshi consulates. Another reason for working together is also exchanging policies and rules in other countries to understand migration processes so that they can be of help to each other. Mrinal voices out, albeit frustratedly,

*"People in CHT don't have social security, respect, or minimum benefits of being Bangladeshi citizens. Why should you stay back?" I strongly believe we should bring as many people as we can to Australia or other countries. Any country is better than Bangladesh".*

On the 13 June 2017, the Australian *Jumma* communities and friends protested against the 2 June 2017 communal attack and arson on four villages in Longudu, a Chakma-dominated area in the CHT, Bangladesh, at the Assembly Area of capital Canberra's Parliament House. Devi and Juni took part in the protest along with other *Jummas* from all over Australia. Another protest was held on 26 February 2018 in front of the Australian Parliament House and the Bangladesh High Commission, in Canberra. It was organised by the CHT *Jumma* Association, Australia, in collaboration with the Australian *Jumma* community against the physical assault on Chakma Rani Yan Yan (wife of Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy) and one other volunteer by the security forces and seeking justice for the rape of two Marma sisters reportedly by the Bangladeshi security forces. Simultaneous protests were also held globally in New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, and other cities.

This is one of the examples of putting pressure on the Bangladeshi government and raising global awareness. Because of the small numbers of diasporic Chakmas outside the CHT, it seems most of them are aware of who lives where especially if they have achieved something major personally or

professionally. Nanadhon suggests all diasporic Chakmas should think globally and make bigger and more conspicuous global impacts,

*“If we want to work for the community, we need to think outside the box. People from other countries need to know about us, and we can only do that if we can live in other countries or first-world, developed countries. And by education and educating more and more people, we will be able to let the world know about us. Some people, such as Amit Chakma, are a great example. Bhumitra Chakma often publishes; Kabita Chakma is working for them too. I think because we are outside, we try harder to keep our identity by meeting other Chakmas or Jummas and teaching our children more than people back home”.*

Not only Nanadhon, but all participants also seem to utilise the opportunity of educating others about the Chakmas whenever the possibility arises. Gita makes sure at her workplace, people call her Chakma, “they will at least remember the name, so if they meet someone or hear in the news they’ll think about me”. Gita remembers after the 9/11 incident in the US, many people reacted after she revealed her native country, so she would say, “We are not Muslims, we are *gom* better”. Others too take the opportunity to raise awareness about the Chakma and the *Jummas*, which Devi calls “baby steps” towards global awareness.

More recently, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, there was an outpouring of help from the diasporic *Jumma* communities to work together in donating money and helping to distribute food to the remote regions in the CHT. I have observed constant updates on Facebook by the CHT COVID-19 Emergency Aid Committee, where *Jummas* discussed and planned how they were reaching out to the poor.

#### 4.3.6 Thoughts about the Future of the CHT and its People

All the participants are aware of the fact that the number of *Jumma* and Chakma people leaving Bangladesh has increased significantly. They all know or have heard of someone who secretly fled to India or to other countries seeking political asylum or immigrating to other countries. I wanted to know their thoughts on this and the future of the CHT. Their views on this matter varied considerably. For example, Devi thinks that because of the way the CHT has been infiltrated with Bengali settlers, she does not see much hope in the future. In the next few generations, she contends,

*“Maybe we will have the same fate as many other people in other countries. I fear that not only Chakmas in the CHT, other communities as well, will be displayed in museums. I genuinely feel people who are spreading out have a much better chance of surviving and keeping the Chakma identity and passing it on to our next generations than those who are living in CHT”.*

Devi, therefore, argues that leaving the CHT is a “very positive trend”, even those who are living in Dhaka or other cities are bringing financial security for the family and the wider community. The only way to keep strong, Devi continues, is becoming economically independent. She is strongly of the opinion that moving out of Bangladesh is probably a decision many Chakmas should consider if they want to survive and keep the Chakma identity.

All the participants showed great concern about the roles of the military in the CHT region. Mrinal believes they hold a very important role in the CHT and in Bangladeshi politics.

*“The people there don’t have control over their own peace-they have to rely on the army. How can we have peace there if communal violence happens so frequently and when we get treated like second-class citizens?”*

Juni and Devi seem to hold the same opinion that if we want peace in the CHT, the army have to be removed as per the 1997 Peace Accord. They opine, not having “power and voice” will keep the people “crippled” even if they become formally educated. There seems to be a grave concern about the declining ratio of the *Jumma* and Bengalis. In fact, the focus group discussion (see Chapter 3) evolved around this topic – how systematically the Bangladeshi governments have implanted more Bengali settlers over the years in the CHT region. They all fear that this trend will continue until, Devi says, “they overtake our land and religion”. As mentioned in Chapter 2, converting the local Jummas to Islam has become a feared trend in the region, added to the increasing number of Bengali Muslims.

Nanadhon appeared to be the only person who is positive about the future of the region and strongly believes peace is only a matter of time. The young generations in the future will come up with some solutions that would bring peace to the region. He illustrates his idea that “we will evolve, adapt and survive”, because he strongly believes young people are more understanding and innovative, and they solve things differently. This is how Nanadhon explains it:

*“I’m not very stressed about the current situation in the CHT. If we can’t solve it, leave it, the next generations will solve it. I don’t take it as a burden on me that we should do something right now to solve it. For me, keep our identity alive by educating ourselves, and the solutions will be there in the future. Let me give you an example; when I was in Singapore in 1997, I was very keen on learning the Chakma alphabet. I was trying to learn it on my computer, but it was difficult, and I was not very successful and eventually stopped the project. But now you can download it, learn it because the young generation came up with a solution. I admit we still need to improve a lot, but it’s a start, a good start”.*

Another commonly shared view was for the *Jummas* to be recognised as Indigenous/Adivasis so that they get international support. They all seemed to be aware of the fact that there are “certain benefits” of being recognised as Indigenous/Adivasis, such as the international organisations that work with rights and human rights violations putting pressure on the Bangladeshi government. Participants expressed both frustration and anger to have been called derogatory terms, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Growing up being teased with “racial slurs”, as Devi and Mrinal say, have had a huge impact on their mental wellbeing. Similarly, Gita talked about growing up with *chhoto mon* lacking confidence because of the negative representation of the Chakma that has affected her confidence level. She says, “When you’re constantly teased of your incorrect pronunciation or questioned of what you eat or represented in the text books in a derogatory, negative way, it’s hard to grow up with a lot of confidence”.

What Gita said was echoed by all other participants, namely, that the Bengali Muslims will never understand the degree of racism they had to go through. Binu said regarding Bengalis, “it’s just a curiosity, but they do not realise it is hurtful to us, we want to be accepted the way we look, the way we are, but we don’t get that”. Juni revealed, “The sad thing is we don’t understand that we are being subjected to racism, discrimination because we didn’t even know these words. Actually, until I came to study in Australia, I never fully realised these issues”. Mrinal and Nanadhon, too, believed that because they came to Australia, they became more aware of the extent of discriminatory practices towards the minorities in Bangladesh.

#### 4.3.7 Summary of Level One Findings

In Section 4.3, I have provided a brief profile of each participant followed by level one data analysis that discussed the six categories around which my interview questions were focused. It has analysed what kind of educational environment the seven participants grew up in, the reasons they chose to immigrate to Australia, including their initial settlement process as immigrants. It also analysed whether and how they keep regular contacts with the CHT and its people, the activities they are involved in in Melbourne individually and as a group, the reasons behind working with the other diasporic Chakma/*Jumma* communities in other countries, and finally, their thoughts, hopes, and wishes about the future of the CHT.

The section shows that the education participants received in Australia as AusAID scholars not only helped them find better employment after they returned to Bangladesh with an Australian degree, but that their views and opinions towards Bangladesh had shifted significantly in several areas; for instance, they became more aware of the possibility of having a safer and better life, of discriminatory practices towards the minorities in the CHT, of their rights as citizens and equal rights for women. In the following section, I discuss my three findings that emerged from the level one analysis.

## 4.4 Level Two: Thematic Analysis

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of a group of Chakma Bangladeshi immigrants in Melbourne on how and whether education is helping them to maintain their Chakma culture and identity in diaspora. This section presents the key findings obtained from two rounds of semi-structured interviews and the focus group held with the participants. Through the process of undertaking a cluster analysis (as explained in the diagram in Section 4.2) of the above level one data analysis of the seven participants' responses, three major findings emerged from this study,

1. **Upward Mobility and Security:** Most of the participants discussed how their career has advanced in Melbourne, their sense of belonging/not belonging in Australia, racism, recognition, the Chakma women's position in the patriarchal society, and gender discrimination.
2. **Preserving Culture in diaspora:** All participants greatly emphasised the role of communal and individual activities in retaining Chakma culture and identity in Melbourne but at the same time voiced their fear of losing Chakmaness.
3. **The Role of Advocacy:** All participants expressed deep concern about the future of the CHT, and therefore, they work with other diasporic Chakma/*Jumma* communities to raise global awareness to be recognised as Indigenous/Adivasi.

These three findings have been identified as the most persistent, recurring, and distinguishing aspects of these Chakmas' diasporic life in Melbourne, which seemed to shape their perceptions of, on the one hand the importance of and connections forged through keeping in touch with their homeland and other diasporic Chakma/*Jumma* communities, and on the other hand, the value of passing the Chakma culture to the next generation. At the same time, after achieving safety, security, freedom, and overall, a better life after immigration, they take up a role of advocacy to raise awareness about the political oppression, discrimination, militarisation, and Islamisation in the region.

It is important to acknowledge, however, the messiness of this analysis process, as the ideas and feelings are often idiosyncratic in nature, which made it challenging to put them in specific categories, because some of them would not fit clearly or exactly in a category.

### 4.4.1 Finding 1: The Role of Education in Upward Mobility and Security

Throughout the individual interviews and focus group discussion, participants spoke about the importance of their AusAID degrees from various Australian universities and how they have helped them achieve better jobs, although for some it was a struggle at the beginning of the settlement process. They agree that they are happy with their life style, career and above all having a better and more secure life. This section will first address several factors that helped them in advancing their



careers: calling Australia home, their experiences in relation to racism and women's shifting roles from the patrilineal society of the Chakmas in the CHT to becoming more empowered women (note: female participants only) in Melbourne.

#### 4.4.1.1 Calling Australia Home

Six participants, though not Devi, consider Australia as their home. It was evident that for them having a peaceful, better, and secure life is the first priority, and for that, they are willing to go through hurdles and challenges in life. But at the same time, three specific factors contributed to the participants' feeling of belongingness in Australia. First, they felt they were now living with *shadhinota* freedom. Although at the beginning of the settling process, it was not easy or smooth, especially for Juni, Gita, and Mrinal, with managing children, finding a job, and encountering people from different cultures, it did not take very long for them to realise that deciding to immigrate to Australia had been the best decision in life. The quality of life that Australia offers to its immigrants is, Babu believes, "high-quality life with fewer people, less traffic, fresh air". Nanadhon considers managing work-life balance as the best thing in Australia, as he compares his life in Japan and Singapore. As a family man, for Nanadhon, it is extremely important to be able to spend quality time with his three children, and at the same time to have enough money to enjoy life – meetings, gatherings, and family picnics are important parts of a comfortable life for these Chakmas.

As mentioned above (Section 4.2), Gita suffered depression, anxiety, and overall, unhappiness during the first year of settling down, when she struggled to find a job and to take care of her developmentally delayed daughter, so that at some point she had gone through many sleepless nights, fearing she would receive a phone call with some "dreadful news". Not getting a job also contributed to her mental health and had strongly affected her "confidence level". She had expected to be employed "pretty soon" because of having two Australian degrees from two "very good universities" and having worked for UNDP. She elaborates, "6/7 months were gone with two little babies, and they were struggling with their language too in a changed environment". Nevertheless, she reveals after getting a job as an engineer, she slowly started enjoying her life, and now very confidently she feels that Melbourne is her home and Australia is her country; she says, "of course I'll always be a Bangladeshi in my heart, but I'm an Australian now". She now believes, in Bangladesh, she probably would not have advanced as far in her career as where she is now, simply because "you need to have *mama*, *chacha* connections with powerful people if you want to get a promotion". She believes Australia is a country where people get recognised for their talent, hard work and get appreciated accordingly.

Financial stability, local council perks, such as parks to play in, and local libraries, are important aspects for them to lead a quality life. Gita, in this regard, feels both fortunate and grateful that she had chosen to call Australia home. She says, "Because my little one was diagnosed with development delay, I

wouldn't have proper school for her in Bangladesh, people would have asked questions, ahhh, intimidating or uncomfortable questions!". Here especially because of her younger daughter Gita feels "blessed where people don't see my daughter any differently, they are actually very helpful and kind".

Finally, because of the multicultural society they are living in, as Devi says, "in Australia, we are encouraged to hold onto our own culture, and we even get praised that we are doing so well in our third language". This has contributed to their feeling of belongingness to Australia. They also tell others that they are people from Bangladesh whenever they get an opportunity, which Binu says is a very good way of contributing to spreading the news about the Chakma. Binu says, "Isn't it interesting that in Australia we can openly call ourselves [Indigenous Chakma] and most of the time we actually get respect for that, whereas, in Bangladesh, calling ourselves [Indigenous] could put us in jail". Their Indigeneity and connection to the CHT, their "roots" as they often refer to this, was felt very strongly during both rounds of interviews and in the focus group discussion.

The participants believe that having access to inclusive educational and cultural systems that Australia promotes and knowing their children are growing up with these values make them extremely proud to be able to call Australia home, a country to which they do not have to prove that they belong. Mrinal was vocal about the discriminatory treatment he had experienced in Bangladesh, "we always have to prove ourselves that we love the country and the Bengalis most of the time treat us suspiciously – is it our fault that we look different? That we want to live with dignity?". It appears that, among many other reasons, these three aspects are considered the most important to feel a sense of belonging to Australia.

#### 4.4.1.2 Adjustment in Careers

Most participants believed their experiences as students on AusAID scholarships and the degrees they acquired helped them extensively in both Bangladesh and Australia in securing better employment. After returning with an Australian degree to Bangladesh, many opportunities opened up for them, such as finding jobs with a high salary in United Nations funded organisations like UNDP and non-government organisations (NGOs) that were chiefly given to candidates with foreign degrees and those who had high English proficiency, particularly in communication skills as they had to interact and liaise with foreigners. After immigration, they were able to use these experiences that aided in finding suitable employment in Australia. However, there appeared to be two distinct groups in adjusting to their careers. In the first group were Devi, Nanadhon, Babu, and Binu. They believe that, despite having struggled during the first few months, finding suitable employment was not a big challenge. On the other hand, others believed their degrees from Bangladesh and in Australia and work experiences were not helpful in securing employment.

The first group believes there are several factors that helped them. Firstly, having acquired transferable skills, such as being a medical doctor for Babu, a software engineer for Nanadhon, a chemist for Binu, and an accountant for Devi, they found that securing professional employment was “not very challenging” as Babu and Nanadhon said, resulting in occupational mobility. For Nanadhon, having worked in two other countries like Singapore and Japan was a big advantage because Australia has a good relationship with both countries and acknowledged his transferable skills. Secondly, technology played a key factor in securing jobs. Using online job search portals, such as seek.com.au and LinkedIn, were effective in advancing their careers in Australia. Binu particularly benefitted from these portals as she was hired three months after immigration through LinkedIn and believes that “Networking is very important to learn about the work culture here and how things work in Australia”. Similarly, Gita believes it is crucial to learn and understand Australian work culture, starting with volunteering, networking and making local connections as soon as immigrants arrive in the country. Gita and Juni both experienced “understanding Aussie work culture a lot better by volunteering in the local community”.

Data also revealed that even those who consider they have moved “downward” in their career (Juni and Mrinal) compared to the social status and earnings they had in Bangladesh, still strongly believe living in a safe country without fearing for life is always preferable. As Mrinal said,

*“What is more important in life? Living with a good job, with lots of money, or living in a country where you maybe don’t have a very good job, but you live happily with security? I’ll definitely choose a safe life for my children”.*

Juni, too, showed greater appreciation of the life she has built in Melbourne with two daughters and her husband, emphasising that she has never regretted her decision to immigrate despite realising she will not get a job “as prestigious, as well paid as in Bangladesh”.

However, it was also evident that both Juni and Mrinal experienced losing social status after immigration, which was challenging to accept. Juni criticised how she was suggested “to anglicise” her name because employers prefer people with easy-to-pronounce names while she was “desperately trying to get into something because I wasn’t earning a single penny”. Juni continues, “even though I had so much experience, my experience was in Bangladesh and what I realised is local people don’t really give importance to overseas experiences, certainly not Bangladeshi experience”. Juni had worked as a magistrate in Rangamati, as well as for international organisations before immigration. Although they both wanted to project themselves as happy and satisfied with what they are doing, I could not help but feel that there was a sense of disappointment in their tone.

#### 4.4.1.3 Experiencing Racism in Australia

It appeared that all seven participants believe Australia welcomes diversity, multiculturalism and is very accepting towards its immigrant population. Because of the diverse backgrounds of the immigrants, it is easy for the participants of this study to feel included within the broader Asian community while still maintaining their identity, their own culture. They claim to have not experienced racism; only Devi said she had seen “subtle racism here and there”, but these incidents were nowhere close to what she had experienced in Dhaka. Juni and Binu, on the other hand, believe that they have become more aware of racism and discrimination only after coming to Australia, and similar to Devi, they both believe that, compared to Bangladesh, their experiences over all these years here in Melbourne have been “excellent”.

Like Devi, Gita believes there is definitely racism in Australia; however, in her experience, it is related to Bangladesh (particularly after 9/11) being a Muslim country (hence to the Bengalis), not towards her ethnicity. Gita recalls after the 9/11 incident in the US, “I would say people looked at me funny and quite negatively because they assumed I was a Muslim too” after revealing her native country, so she would say, “We are not Muslims, we are *gom* better”. In a recent conversation with Gita, she mentioned that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese people, along with other Asian people, have experienced “strong racism”. Gita believes this is because of ignorance, lack of proper knowledge, or simply because it is human nature to blame people for something beyond their control. Babu shares his idea of racism like this,

*“Majority, minority, racism, discrimination are inherent in peoples, ruling others is inherent in human nature; at least that is what I have seen in my life. But we learn to be tolerant and compassionate through education, and Australian society practises that, and that’s why I haven’t experienced racism”.*

Babu also reveals that if someone behaves badly towards him, he does not necessarily think it has anything to do with racism – it might be because that person is “probably having a bad day”, therefore, it seemed to me that Babu practises compassion very strongly, just as he preaches it. Mrinal seems to be particularly happy about his decision to come to Australia. It could be because of his many traumatic experiences in Khagrachhari that he had to endure from a young age,

*“In Bangladesh, I or we felt like a minority everywhere, whether you go to a market or shopping centre, anywhere ‘they’ will remind you that you’re a Chakma. Even when you go to Dhaka University area, you’ll be yelled at, oi Chakum, oi Chakma or oi Chinese”.*

Mrinal emphasised *they*, meaning the Bengalis, when he was replying to my question whether he had experienced racism in Australia because he has lived in Adelaide and now in Melbourne. One aspect

that became apparent in the data is that the Chakmas, to some extent, enjoy a sense of *lhizhok* feeling vindicated towards their Bengali counterparts. Because of the larger Asian community, Chakmas do not feel like a minority any longer, whereas the Bengalis, particularly the Bengali Muslims, for the first time have had to experience and endure what it means to be a minority in Melbourne. However, they also argue what the Bengalis experience as racism in Australia is incomparable to their experiences in Bangladesh. Therefore, it appears that the Chakmas believe they feel more at home in Melbourne than the Bengalis.

#### 4.4.1.4 Women Becoming Empowered in Diaspora

The women in this study believe that in the last 15-20 years educational achievements have changed Chakma women's roles in the male-dominated Chakma society through facilitating greater confidence and empowerment for them. However, as for many, for the Chakma women, this is not a straightforward relationship. On the one hand, education has enabled them to access better opportunities in life; on the other hand, education has also created some complexities. It is, after all, not very easy to be a woman in Bangladesh, where women seem to be victimised in almost all spheres of life. Being Indigenous women is even more challenging, since they are discriminated against twice for being women *and* for being Indigenous women, a position that has been understood as akin to that of Spivak's subaltern (1988). In the CHT, the number of Chakma women with a Master's degree who found suitable employment upon completion of studies or training has increased significantly. However, when it comes to marriage, due to an innate patriarchal mindset, most Chakma men do not want to choose independent or "over qualified" women: as Devi says, "independent, liberated women are seen as a threat, someone that they will not be able to dominate".

To verify and better understand Devi's accusation, I spoke to my male cousin, a public university lecturer with a foreign Master's degree who is considered an eligible bachelor in the society, and this proved that Devi is right. He is currently looking for a bride, but his parents want someone who is not "liberated yet", meaning a suitable bride should be five to six years younger, preferably a university student, someone who would be easier to mould. Arguably, such a patriarchal attitude can be harmful to society. On the one hand, women are becoming empowered with financial independence and secured jobs; on the other hand, they are becoming more vulnerable in marriage prospects in society, creating a crisis. It is a contradiction that families want to have economic solvency where daughters are highly encouraged to take education seriously, but later that becomes a problem.

Nevertheless, all four women believed that women generally take education more seriously than men do. In addition, men are aware of their privileged position in the society; for example, Binu believes that her brother or male cousins are not as restricted by social constraints as women and that men

can get away without doing any household chores as they are seen as the responsibility of the girls in the family. Binu explains,

*“Parents give sons more importance than girls. I think it is really unfortunate that they are treated differently. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there should be no difference between sons and daughters”.*

It appears that having lived in Melbourne for few years, Binu has observed that in Australia, men and women are treated equally; that made her aware that women in the Chakma society should also be treated the same as men. The fact that she brought her husband to Australia made her more assertive about how she viewed social equality between men and women. Binu revealed that she did not think like this before when I asked her if she had thought the same while she was growing up in Rangamati. Because it is common to see gender discrimination both in the Chakma society and in the Bangladeshi society, she believes many women just accept it without raising questions, “because that is just how it is”.

This type of awareness or the ability to make such comparisons appeared to be a product of both increased awareness generated by education and exposure to a multicultural society in Australia. Awareness for Binu and the other three women seem to have transformed their sense of self-worth and self-determination in their overall identity and have derived from this sense of empowerment.

Participants observed that in recent years women, particularly the Chakma women in the CHT, have been performing much better at school final exams and university admission tests than men. Devi believes there is a reason for this; women are generally more focused on studies because society looks at them in a different way. For example, Devi said,

*“Chakma women have to be careful about their image. The community will criticise them or they will face bodnam from others. Girls have to be careful in whatever they do, so I think that’s why they are more focused on education”.*

*Bodnam* is having a negative reputation and is exclusively about women (note: not men). It is taken very seriously in the community, particularly when it comes to marriage; women’s families with *bodnam* might be socially humiliated, or marriage prospect jeopardised. A woman’s good reputation or having a positive image is extremely important in the Chakma patriarchal society. Parents teach their daughters from an early age to be *lokkhi* timid, well behaved, not to argue with the *murubbis*, and so on, making sure that they grow up without a voice and within the social constraints. This notion of *bodnam* is a true example of a male-dominated community where girls are scrutinised and judged, which puts strong social pressure on them.

In Australia, these women to some extent no longer have to fear these issues within the broader Australian society, not only for themselves but also for their daughters; however, they still believe that girls/women should dress modestly, especially in front of the elders who come to visit their children and grandchildren as they still hold traditional values. Education, therefore, is a double-edged sword for Chakma women. On the one hand, it empowers them, but on the other hand, it decreases the possibility of marriage prospects.

#### 4.4.2 Finding 2: The Role of Education in Preserving Culture in Diaspora

Throughout the individual interviews and focus group discussion, participants spoke about the various ways in which they invest constant efforts in intergenerational cultural maintenance; and how communal and individual activities they are involved in play an important role in this. This section will first identify several aspects of Chakma culture, which the participants believe are significant markers of their identity and how they wish these to be transmitted to the next generation. Participants' narratives often illustrated complexities between their efforts and reality. At the individual or within the family level, all participants deliberately practise certain traditions and rituals, whereas they see fortnightly or monthly communal gatherings as opportunities for the children to observe the parents and interact with the other children, hoping they will learn from each other.

##### 4.4.2.1 Importance of the Chakma Language

For all of them, oracy in the Chakma language was perceived to be more important than literacy. In other words, conversational competence at least was aspired to, even if in a receptive way. Mrinal explained during the first interview,

*“While it is always our intention that children will communicate with us 100% in Chakma, we also have to make sure that they don’t feel too much pressure. As soon as children go to school, they spend a lot more time outside the home with their friends, always interacting in English. We shouldn’t pressure them too much to speak to us in Chakma. I’m happy if they understand what I say”.*

Mrinal seems to be very aware from his own experience that it is not beneficial to put pressure on children if they are not willing to do things, not only about speaking in Chakma but also deciding on their future path. He believes, from an early age, parents should encourage their children to have their opinions; he likes that “in Australia, children are taught to be confident, give opinions” even when they are only five or six years old. However, he admits that he sometimes gets “frustrated or upset” that children either do not reply to his questions in Chakma or he needs to translate “contents and ideas” into English. In a recent conversation with Mrinal, he wanted me to know that his children are

fluent in Chakma because his parents-in-law have been living with them, due to Covid-19 restrictions meaning the in-laws could not return to Bangladesh. The strict rule at home now is to use only Chakma.

Not only Mrinal, but also participants with younger children – Nanadhon, Gita and Devi – spoke of deliberate practices of talking only in Chakma at home, at times even pretending that they neither understand nor speak English, admitting that sometimes it is very hard to accept the fact that children often reject or are unwilling to speak the language at all. Gita, in this regard, explains that she feels it is “shocking” that her younger daughter simply rejects to speak Chakma, even though it is a “strict policy, only to speak in Chakma at home”.

However, all participants also agree that they themselves do not speak “pure Chakma”; because of the heavy Bengali language influence, they translanguage and “insert” many Bengali words while speaking. Similarly, because of their Australian degrees and living here for many years, they now speak a type of *shonkor* mixed up language where Chakma, Bengali, and English words are constantly used; therefore, Nanadhon says, “children can’t be blamed for refusing to speak Chakma, because we, the adults are more or less doing the same”. Devi and Mrinal also believe that they all want to fit in in Australia, and “consciously or subconsciously, we include so many English words and expressions in our daily life”. During interviews, indeed, most participants used Australian slang, jargon terms, such as bogan, barbie, sickie, whinge, mates, and constantly used no worries, a common expression for Australians to say it is ok.

It is not only the language that participants worry about; Gita thinks ultimately her daughters will lose cultural aspects of Chakmaness. She gives a specific example of her daughter not “showing respect” to the *Shongodana* offering to Buddha after her dad passed away last year. The daughter kept saying she was “bored” and asking when it was going to end. Gita says, “I felt like if she grew up in Bangladesh or in the CHT, she’d understand just by seeing these practices – it wouldn’t be a question, I wouldn’t have to even explain, ever. It’s actually really really [with emphasis] frustrating”. Here Gita sees religious practices as part of the Chakma culture that she wants her daughters to learn by seeing and observing her practice.

Data revealed that participants with children want to maintain intergenerational communication to pass on Chakma culture from the previous generation who are in the CHT to the children growing up in Melbourne. They prefer regular, frequent visits to the CHT so that children are “forced to communicate in Chakma”, as Nanadhon says, and experience the culture first hand by seeing and living it. Gita also revealed during the focus group discussion that her daughters’ speaking abilities improved significantly, particularly the younger one became “quite fluent”, because they had stayed in Rangamati for a month during the Christmas holidays. Children had multiple opportunities to



interact with elderly relatives and children of similar age. Therefore, paying regular visits, despite them being “very expensive” is their first priority, or, if possible, bringing the elderly relatives to Melbourne – in both cases, there are no other options for the children than conversing in Chakma.

#### 4.4.2.2 Importance of Social Networks - Meetings and Gatherings

Nanadhon also reiterated the significant amount of time children spend outside the home. In this respect, he discusses the “extremely important” aspects of social, communal, and religious get-togethers. Nanadhon seems to believe that in order to make his children “connected” with the other Jummas, he needs to be actively engaged in maintaining ongoing relationships with them. All other six participants mentioned that Nanadhon generally takes the initiative and organises most social meetings and gatherings at his place. He admits that with the new immigrants, the “age gap is widening” and the newly arrived young students or couples probably do not want to “hang out” with the oldies like him; he nevertheless always “looks out for opportunities, be it a new baby, Australia Day or the Melbourne Cup or house warming parties”.

He admits that people are at different stages of life with different priorities, so it is getting increasingly challenging, but everyone needs to try harder as it is about keeping a *Jatir ostitto* survival of a community. The way Nanadhon prioritises organising these gatherings seems like a lot of hard work, but he encourages everyone, especially the young people, to make time despite busy schedules, because to him, this is “the best way to keep connected with our *Jumma* culture”. Children, according to Nanadhon, “need to be curious, [we need to] expose them to different things, customs and culture and let them explore and learn”, however, not at the cost of losing their own culture.

Echoing Nanadhon, Babu, Gita, and Juni also seem to try hard to make time for meeting others. They particularly greatly emphasise the importance of *Bizu*, trying to make it “a 100% attendance, which is yet to be a 100% success” (Nanadhon). To Babu, “*Bizu* is not only a mere gathering, but it also represents the true essence of what means to be a Chakma or a *Jumma*”. By “true essence” he means this is when the *Jummas* come together irrespective of their socio-economic background, forgetting all the year’s hardships and unfortunate happenings and experiences people in the CHT go through. It is a time to re-energise themselves with *notun uddipona* the beginning of a new start. Similarly, in Melbourne, this is the time to reminisce about the happy memories of the CHT, to show what it means to be a Chakma. Nanadhon, therefore emphasises making it a 100% gathering as he believes,

*“What children learn and observe at Bizu during these three days is equivalent to what they see every day at home. We must try to keep coming together no matter what, for our sake and most importantly for the kids’ sake”.*

This type of community connection – trying to achieve 100% attendance with all the Chakmas/*Jummas* present is reflected in all the participants' desire to carry on their culture for the children. However, they do not want to be involved with the Bengali community's activities, which are done on a much larger scale, given their considerably bigger population in Melbourne. It appears that some participants avoid Bengali gatherings for two reasons: one, they do not see any value in these; they would rather spend this free time with other Chakmas. Second, they believe Bengalis are "too formal" – as Gita says, "you need to invite or be invited to visit a Bengali's home, whereas, with us Chakmas, you can just pop in without any formality". Gita, Juni, and Devi also commented that they avoid revealing their Bangladeshi identity when they hear someone speaking in Bengali in public. They seem to find it rather amusing that they can "blend in among other Asians" and overhear conversations without being suspected of being a Bengali speaker – because of their appearances. Juni gives examples of several situations where she just sat and listened to conversations, smiling inside, during her commutes to work, or at shopping centres.

#### 4.4.2.3 Fear of Losing Culture/Tradition

There seems to be a sense of urgency in the participants' voices to do as much as possible to sustain Chakma culture and identity in Melbourne, and for that, they are involved in multiple ways of practising social, personal, and community-based activities that are embedded in their Chakma culture and identity preservation. However, some of them also show grave concern about how long this can be sustained. Due to their small numbers, there is a strong fear that Chakma culture, traditions, and overall Chakma identity may not endure intergenerationally unless more Chakmas immigrate to Australia. Even so, given the multicultural texture of Australian society, even this is doubtful.

There is no denying that immigrants, especially the first generation, experience immense pressure to get accustomed to the host country in the hope of being socially accepted. They also face multiple struggles in terms of securing employment, accommodation, and the stress of being away from families and relatives back home. In doing so, finding time to spend with children often becomes challenging. Participants believed they would not lose their Chakmaness; although there are parts of their identity they believed they had adapted to integrate into the "broader society", it is the future generation/s that they are more concerned about. Culture is believed by them to be something that can be taught or can be transmitted from one generation to the next. It is often fluid and not a fixed, bounded entity. The data shows that these Chakmas are aware of the possible consequences of their decision to immigrate to Australia, namely their children's eventual assimilation into Australian culture, but they hope to be able to maintain their Chakma identity, which seems to indicate their desire to acculturate that sums up how Mrinal described it,

*“The first generation migrants suffer from an identity crisis, and they impose a lot on their children which is really unfair, there needs to be a balance of things . . . how to integrate into the new society and I think if we can keep the balance well, it should be fine”.*

Nevertheless, most participants acknowledge that in order to make Australia home, they need to integrate into the host culture and learn the Australian way of life. They celebrate Christmas, watch the footy, and value multicultural aspects that are practised. It is important to learn how people express beliefs, customs, and ideas and to become familiar with the “Aussie culture system,” as Nanadhon puts it. They trust it may cause misunderstanding and problems if they rigidly hold onto “only Chakma culture” as it will create gaps in their knowledge system. Juni reveals it used to make her angry when her daughter rolled her eyes if they were not happy with “Asian parenting”, but to her utter surprise, one day she realised she had started doing the same, “something that we Chakmas don’t do”.

Similarly, Nanadhon and Devi seem to have acquired many aspects of Australian culture too, particularly with their gestures such as shrugging and constant use of the expression “you know”. Devi says an interesting fact about herself, “here we wear Western clothes, and I feel that my personality changes slightly depending on what I wear”. For Chakma women, it is not only food or cultural adaptation; clothes are also an important aspect of integrating into Australian society; they would have worn salwar kameez or saree or *pinon hadi* if they had lived in Bangladesh (which they still do occasionally). Although many young girls/women now wear “Western clothes” in the CHT, these women grew up at a time when wearing Western clothes was not common.

The participants also shared experiences around getting asked “critical questions” by the children about sleepovers, sex, and “uncomfortable questions” that sometimes create “frictions” in the family. This seems to happen particularly to those with teen-aged daughters, as Juni and Gita reveal. Juni said her husband would disapprove of some dresses her daughters wanted to wear or mixing with boys, and she had to balance like a “middleman”. She thinks it was one of the hardest times in Melbourne that she had not anticipated. Gita, too expressed similar experiences; she is finding it hard to communicate with her daughter, who is often calling her “a typical Asian mom”. Both women believe fathers do not understand the changes girls go through during the teenage period as they are struggling to understand their own body but at the same time trying hard to fit in. These girls see two different worlds; home is a restricted place where parents are controlling, and outside, where Australian culture seems liberal and more supportive, that creates a vacuum in their cultural identity. Gita and Juni both became actively engaged with their daughters’ school, constantly trying to understand their daughters’ thought processes and mediating cultural differences by talking to other

parents and sometimes “hiding things from husbands”. Because in Chakma society, Juni utters, “It’s always the mother’s fault if children turn out bad or do something that they aren’t supposed to”. These accounts show that the Chakma women are balancing both household and outside pressures for the children and working as a bridge between the father and the daughters to make sure that they can live harmoniously.

In general, participants believe that in order to have a good, happy, and successful life in Australia, immigrants need to integrate in the host society, but they also fear that ultimately the Chakma culture will be assimilated within the multicultural Australian society. As Babu says, “I believe Australia is one of the most multicultural societies on earth, and it’s easy to feel at home with the open-minded approach to multiculturalism. We want our kids to feel at home; it’s hard to be the first generation, and we shouldn’t impose our upbringing, how we were raised by our parents”. It also appeared that parents constantly doubt where to draw the line in parenting, “we have to ignore many things that we don’t approve; otherwise they’ll not grow up happy” as Gita says. Perhaps, this feeling of drawing a line is not unusual for many immigrants who grew up in a comparatively restricted society where patriarchy is felt in almost every sphere of life.

#### 4.4.2.4 Hyphenated Identities

As discussed in Chapter 2, perceptions of culture and identity seem to be even more complex. It is not a question of *either* or *or*, rather of something in between, and only hyphenated nominalisation can do justice to the hybrid states that immigrants represent or they identify with, rather than *one* or the *other*. Sometimes it seems these participants’ attachment to Bangladesh is multifaceted, often associating Bengali ethnicity and Islam as one. In their conversations, they occasionally use these two terms interchangeably; even though one is about ethnicity and the other about religion, these two are often conflated, indicating some degree of homogenisation. Although there are Hindu Bengalis and Buddhist Bengalis, it appeared that when they mention Bengalis, they usually refer to the Bengali Muslims. Therefore, the relationship between Chakmas and Bengalis in Melbourne appears to be complex.

To Babu, Gita, and Binu, it is more “harmonious and easier” in Melbourne compared to how it is in Bangladesh for two reasons. First, they believe the Bengalis that immigrated to Australia are highly educated with more awareness of cultural diversity, racism, and discrimination”, and because for the first time these Bengalis “find themselves as minorities in Australia due to their religion Islam and physical appearance, they’re often perceived [as] Indians”. Gita thinks this creates “some sort of identity crisis among Bengali Muslims, and that’s why they become more religious and rigid”. Second, there is a common feeling of “deshiness”- a mutual understanding and bonding they share simply because of being Bangladeshis. Indeed, the “minority feeling” happens with Chakmas to a much lesser

degree for two reasons: they had already experienced being a minority in Bangladesh, and because of their Asian appearance, they are seen as being part of the sprawling community of Asians in Melbourne.

However, to Mrinal trusting the Bengalis is not easy. Although he admits he has some very good Bengali friends in Australia, he still remains vigilant of what he says in front of them, unable to be “100% true to himself around Bengali friends”. Mrinal also revealed during the focus group discussion that he felt somewhat safer because “Australia is a lawful country where the Bengalis will not dare to do any harm”. Yet, none would want their children to marry a Bengali, which shows a deeper sense of rejection and distrust that continues to persist even in Melbourne. Decades of Bengali oppression seem to have solidified within them in such a manner that the bitterness often remains, even in diaspora. The participants, except for Nanadhon, also seem to view knowing the Bengali language as having no value for the second generation of Chakma children who most likely will not speak Bengali at all.

Some participants seem to feel divided and felt the need to negotiate how to identify themselves when it comes to their Bangladeshi and Australian identities. They would hide their Bangladeshi identity unless they have to reveal it, especially when Bangladesh is connected to Islam and Muslims – they do not want to be associated with these, representing themselves differently and *othering* by saying that they are “better” than Muslims because they are Buddhists – a different religion – and because they are Chakmas – a different ethnicity and culture. It seems participants continue to carry the religious tensions in diaspora, because the machinery that subjugated the Jummas in the CHT was not just a political one but one that was also very much religious (see Section 2.2).

Devi reflects on the ways she has negotiated her at times duelling identities in order to avoid misunderstanding during Ramadan. When people hear that she is from Bangladesh, many think she is fasting, and she has to explain the reasons. Although she takes it as an opportunity to “spread the news about Chakmas”, she has to be careful how she is representing Bangladesh at the same time. Paradoxically, she does not like it when others say negative things about Bangladesh, but at the same time, she does not want to be connected to the country.

Juni’s attitude towards Bengalis is even more complex. She herself is happy to be recognised as a Bangladeshi; however, she does not want her daughters to “socialise or mix with them”. Now that her daughters might start dating, she remains cautious, jokingly revealing to me in the first interview that her daughters asked whether it would be ok to marry a white or an Asian looking Muslim, to which she replied, “they might look like us, but remember they’re still Muslims, we won’t be able to have a proper relationship with them”. Her lack of trust and hatred towards Muslims and the Chakma’s

Islamophobia seems to be deeply ingrained in her core belief that irrespective of nationalities, she will never allow her daughters to date or marry Muslims. Juni wants her daughters to be identified as Australian-Chakmas.

Both Juni and Devi grew up outside the CHT as mentioned in Section 4.1 and, therefore, interacted mostly with the Bengalis; however, it appears they carry the strongest resentment against the Bengali Muslims, a deep-seated, inflexible mindset not to change. Devi's next comment might explain why she is so resentful, "Whenever we travelled from Dhaka to Rangamati, within the same country, it just felt like I was travelling to my country, (CHT) from a different country (Dhaka)". However, Devi feels she does not really belong in Australia either,

*"Now, I'm here, I enjoy my life, I enjoy the security, I enjoy living in a multi-cultural society but still I wasn't born and brought up here, I sort of feel like "Ure eshe jure bosha unwanted visitor". I'm not fully Australian either, so for me, I can't say I 100% belong to any country. Even in the Chakma community, because I grew up in Dhaka, I feel I don't belong with them, not quite 100% either. So I'm open to all cultures, I still want to hold my Chakma identity but as a global citizen".*

On the other hand, because of his traumatic experience in 1986, Mrinal seems to remain vigilant and cautious while interacting with mainly "unknown" Bengali friends; he agrees that this is not a healthy mindset, but he "can't help" feeling like that.

Another aspect was the participants' attitudes towards the Australian culture while maintaining Chakma culture and identity in diaspora. They all agree they feel safer in Australia, but it is hard to make friends with the "*dhup* white Australians" for several reasons, among which there are prominent cultural differences - such as not understanding shared jokes or not growing up listening to Australian music, reading Australian literature or watching Australian movies. For Nanadhon, another aspect is "how we grow up valuing different things," by which he means Australian society is an individualistic society, "It's *me* - focused, whereas I think we are *we* - focussed". While he hopes his three children will grow up strong, voicing opinions, he wishes they would still nurture the community bonding, respecting the older people, and continue practising important aspects of the Chakma culture. There is a commonly shared fear that the future generations of Chakma will eventually fully assimilate into the mainstream society in a generation or two.

Language seems to be yet another barrier for the participants in making friends with Caucasian Australians. Being able to speak the language is one thing, but being able to express emotions, humour is another to Mrinal and Juni. They believe one needs to grow up in the culture to become a part of that culture. All the participants, therefore, wish and hope that their children will make more friends

and understand Australian culture but at the same time respect their Chakma roots. Binu, on the other hand, has yet to feel connected to Australian people and their culture as she says,

*“I still don’t feel very interested about Australian drama or serials or even not interested in knowing much. I know it’s not good, but I’m just telling you the truth. If I see Dhaka here on TV, my heart races faster. There’s this connection that I don’t think I’ll feel about Australia”.*

#### 4.4.2.5 Religion as an Invisible Marker of Identity

Buddhism has become a central part of the participants' Chakmaness, particularly for Babu, Gita, and Mrinal, whereas religion was less of a factor in the CHT for most of them. They explained that it was more of a “cultural thing”, just like a lot of things they would do because people went to a *keyang* on certain occasions where they would pray and socialise with others. Gita said, “Religion was not a huge factor; it was the other factors related to it, meeting friends, feeling a sense of peace inside the *keyang*, eating so many types of food and so on”. However, in Melbourne, Buddhism seems to play an important marker in Chakma identity. First, through this they differentiate themselves from the Bengalis, and second, what was largely insignificant once (because in the CHT, all Chakmas are Buddhist anyway) suddenly becomes an important marker of identity in Melbourne, a trait that distinguishes them and consolidates their position as Chakmas.

Second, they separate themselves from other Buddhists too because of the differences in practising Buddhism; not only between Theravada and Mahayana praying rituals but also because the praying languages are different. Gita believes it is her and other parents’ responsibility to teach the Chakma Buddhist rituals, ceremonies that are quite differently done from other Buddhists, such as in Vietnamese and Chinese temples. Therefore, Babu has taken the initiative to build the CHT *keyang*, which will serve two purposes; traditional and cultural practices where they would be able to have gatherings, rather than going to a house; and religious rituals and ceremonies, such as organising particular ceremonies for Kathina Civara Daana, Buddha Purnima and other times as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is the place where all participants visualise building a library and a school in the future to carry on the Chakma legacy for the next generations.

The examples above show participants put great efforts into preserving Chakma culture, where Buddhism plays an important role in their identity in Melbourne. However, they are aware that things might not turn out as they are planning; the future generations of Chakma might integrate into the Australian society well while holding onto their Chakma values or completely assimilate in a multicultural yet assimilationist country like Australia.

The data revealed for all the Chakmas, family is the centre of culture preservation, and parents try to project the importance of family cohesion, such as eating meals together while speaking only Chakma.

In this regard, Gita, Juni, Nanadhon, and Devi all agreed that children spend most of their daytime outside studying or playing, and they only interact in English. Therefore, they try to have conversations during mealtime, asking the children their daily routines, what they have learnt. Gita said,

*“Dinner is the only time we can eat together during weekdays. My husband and I try really hard to have dinner together, and I think we’ve been quite successful. When my daughters ask, ma, don’t we have hurbo tonight, it makes me very happy”.*

Hurbo is a common chilly appetiser that a meal would usually begin with.

Babu tries to spend a substantial amount of time with his adult daughter as much as possible; he takes her out for dinner, to movies, to art exhibitions, and often posts them on Facebook. He explained to me that because his ex-wife lives in Sydney, it is important for him to make sure that the daughter keeps a healthy relationship with her mother, “we are the family for her in Australia, if we were in Bangladesh, she would be surrounded by relatives, and I wouldn’t have to worry about her being lonely”. Babu has sponsored two nephews with families, and he confided in me that he feels relieved now that his daughter has a few cousins in her life.

Recently I have observed that Chakma parents have started teaching verses from the Tripitaka to their children. I have seen many Facebook posts where parents are encouraging each other to start teaching children the easy verses first.

#### 4.4.3 Finding 3: The Role of Education in the Role of Advocacy in Diaspora

It was quite impossible for the participants to talk about their lives in Melbourne, Australia, without mentioning the political situation in the CHT, which further indicates how Chakma identity and the CHT are inseparably intertwined; painful memories and histories of discrimination and injustice have contributed to shaping who they have become. Most participants in this study register a sense of hopelessness, frustration, and pessimism about the future of “the back home”, the CHT.

I observed during the Focus Group Discussion that the participants helped each other to remember certain dates, times of communal violence, and the number of attacks or how many political groups there are in the CHT currently operating and correcting each other when needed; in this way they were constructing collective memories. They also contested each other’s memories and helped me understand certain contexts when I did not understand; they later sent me some evidence or dates that I was not aware of. Their keenness in making sure I had the right information was indicative of how serious they thought the Chakma history is for me to document in my study. For them, this was more than a matter of historical accuracy; it seemed that for them, the only way of making sense of



the reality of Chakmas was to portray faithfully and in detail the broader historical context against which their personal stories were narrated.

Nevertheless, this section will discuss the four aspects in which participants in this study take an advocacy role in order to raise awareness not only in the transnational spaces but also among the Adivasis in Bangladesh, because ultimately the CHT people need to be in control of their fate as Babu said many times.

#### 4.4.3.1 The Politics of Nomenclature

*“We want to put a stop to name-calling. We want to be recognised as jati, not Upo-jati” – Juni*

State machineries (e.g., policies, the constitution, laws, regulations, the curriculum, etc.) can gradually create discourses of discrimination that are normalised over a period of time (such as *Upo-jati* being a preferred word). The Bangladeshi government has never stopped using derogatory terms when it comes to describing the minorities in the CHT. They all grew up being called *Upo-jati* and over the years, these terms have changed many times. However, none of them has been approved or accepted by the communities. Alongside *Upo-jati*, the government uses other terms, such as tribal peoples, hill tribes, and recently *Khudro nrigoshthi* tiny-ethnicity. In this regard, Gita said, Khudro has a “negative connotation, it makes you feel down or rather small, tiny, weak something not big or broad . . . it’s not respectful”. Therefore, many of these terms have acquired the connotation of primitiveness or backwardness and hence are widely rejected by representatives of Indigenous Peoples today. The participants in this study feel the same; the degree of frustration can be understood when Nanadhon said,

*“We could never decide what we wanted to be called, the government and the Bengali people gave us the names, terrible, disrespectful names . . . it feels so powerless. I don’t know how long we have to struggle to be recognised as Indigenous or Adivasis”.*

The objective of not being able to determine what to be called, per se – and certainly changing this seems unattainable to Nanadhon – shows how the Bangladeshi government has used repression as one of the means of controlling its minorities.

Nanadhon feels powerless due to the fact that the Chakmas or the *Jummas*, have never been asked what they would like to be called (just like the character Friday in Daniel Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe*), how they want to be represented or identified. This feeling of powerlessness has created insecurity in their birthplace. Mrinal lashed out in his frustration by saying this,

*“People in CHT don’t have social security, respect, or minimum benefits of being Bangladeshi citizens. I hate the term Upo-jati, I really hate it. We are constantly being abused with these*

*disrespectful terms. The government refuses to give us the respect we deserve. Why should you stay back? People should try to leave and live in other countries; at least they'll live".*

Participants seemed to believe that the discontinuity and inconsistency in the naming (*Upo-jati, Khudro nrigoshthi, Pahari*, etc.) along with the constant use of many derogatory terms for the last 40 to 50 years, reflect confusion, ambivalence, and political unease over the recognition by the government of Chakmas and other minorities in Bangladesh.

Media also portrays the Chakma people and culture as others; as Devi puts it, "we are presented as different, excluded, rather than included, which has contributed to how Bengali people see "especially Chakmas as separatists as if we are trying to steal the CHT region from Bangladesh". Devi believes the government has achieved its goals in making the Chakmas "enemies to a certain extent" and therefore, life in the CHT has become very uncertain and insecure. A sudden rumour about a Bengali being attacked can result in major communal violence and multiple deaths, and that "mistrust and even hatred" between the *Jummas* and the Bengalis are so strongly prevalent that Babu says, "You can feel the tension in the air". Gita, in this regard, said it is hard to anticipate when communal violence will take place, "If you are in the wrong place at the wrong time, you might get killed".

The situation has deteriorated because of the prevalence of social media; a fake post on Facebook can immediately create communal violence. For example, during the Rohingya ethnic cleansing in Myanmar in 2018, a number of posts were made that showed Buddhist monks killing the Muslim Rohingyas; instantly, there were several attacks on the Indigenous communities, simply for the reason that there are many Buddhist followers in the CHT. This type of communal violence often occurs abruptly without warnings. Juni went to visit her ailing father a few years ago when she experienced a terrifying ordeal "*hatu kapuni* knee trembling" of a sleepless night.

*"It was after dinner. We were just talking lazily. Suddenly we hear this loud hoi hoi shobdo (loud noise) and dhor dhor (catch them) in Bengali and we hear running footsteps. The whole situation changed from a relaxed to a terrifying situation in seconds . . . this was the first time I experienced when people say when you're scared for your life, your knees tremble. When it was over, I was thinking, thank God, I live in Australia, I know it was a selfish thought, but I couldn't help it".*

This incident, like many other previous occurrences, started because someone spread the false news that a Chakma man had beaten a Bengali man. Without any proof, the Bengali settlers attacked the Chakma villages, burning their houses and physically attacking them, leaving many injured. It is common knowledge of every *Jumma* that behind all these attacks are the army, who support the

settlers in the process of genocide and ethnocide. Participants appear to hold the notion that because of the prefix *upo* sub, there is a connection of the minorities being less important, killing-worthy, and that is why “even the illiterate settlers dare to kill us, grab our lands” as Mrinal says. Babu believes “only talking from outside”, by which he means raising awareness from foreign countries, will never help the local *Jummas*. They must learn how to protect themselves, “violence never solves problems, never brings peace”, as he emphasises getting educated both formally and culturally.

However, only Nanadhon believed the future generation/s (both Chakma and Bengali youths) would be able to find a solution in being “inclusive,” and the current pejorative terms would then disappear. It seemed Nanadhon was very aware of what is happening to the Chakmas or ethnic minorities in many other parts of the world, even as he already called Australia home and had lived here for 12 years. It was evident that he was very well-read and well aware of current affairs, particularly regarding the other Indigenous communities in other parts of the world. He gave examples of the minorities in Canada and New Zealand where the governments have been more “inclusive” and that there indigenous groups have more “involvement in national politics” resulting in a basically “non-violent, co-existence” between the minority communities and the nation-states. Studying in Australia and his experiences of living in Singapore and Japan made him more aware of the conditions of other minorities. He is an active member of the Facebook group of the *Jumma* association in Australia, the group share news about other Indigenous communities and minorities; the purpose of doing this is so that the members can learn from other minorities, their survival skills and share success stories to inspire other *Jummas*, especially the younger generation. He appeared to remain positive and hopeful that the “future Bangladeshis” will come up with a term that would be acceptable by most, if not all.

#### 4.4.3.2 Peace in the CHT: Pessimism about the Prospect

*“We must have done something terrible in our past life to be born in the CHT, where hopes keep disappearing, promises are broken all the time, and people lose their lands” – Gita*

Not everyone shared the same hope and enthusiasm as Nanadhon showed above. There was a sense of hopelessness in most participants’ voices and demeanour when they gave opinions or shared their thoughts about the future of the CHT. Gita calls the political situation in the CHT “simply *hozoborolo* chaotic”, where most plans fail, and promises from the government and the army remain unfulfilled. She is also frustrated that the Chakma leaders sometimes appear to be either “not caring or their hands are tied” because they do not possess any power to do much.

Mrinal particularly seemed pessimistic about the possibility of achieving peace or hope in the Chakma remaining in the CHT. With the increasing number of Bengali people, the settlers, their presence is everywhere, even in the remote hilly areas where it was simply unthinkable to see any Bengali faces in the past. Juni said, “Our land is being grabbed, and the unnecessarily strong presence of the military

is still very much noticeable, so I'd say there's a sense of insecurity in the community". The ongoing demand for the removal of army/military camps from the CHT as part of the Peace Accord (see Section 1.3.5) in 1997 has not been fulfilled yet. There is a strong sense of lack of trust between the army personnel, settlers, and the Indigenous People. Mrinal summed it up eloquently when he said this regarding the possibility of having peace in the CHT,

*"Peace in the CHT entirely depends on the Bangladesh army. They hold a very important role in the region and in BD politics. It all depends on the officer's mentality. Unfortunately, we don't get many good ones, and we don't have any control over our own peace".*

One of the main reasons why Mrinal felt this way might be attributed to his experience of fleeing from home when he was a young adolescent, 11 years old, to save his life. In 1986, there was major communal violence; the settlers, with the army's support, burnt down many houses in his neighbourhood. Mrinal and his family along with some neighbours took shelter in a Bengali government officer doctor's house, abandoning their houses for several days as it was not safe to return. It can only be imagined the severe impact this incident had on Mrinal; it was not a surprise that he no longer wanted to be associated with Bangladeshi nationality after becoming an Australian citizen.

Mrinal was a strong advocate for the people to move out of the region to bigger cities and eventually, if possible, leave Bangladesh for other countries, even for India. He does not see any future for the Chakmas in the CHT. Mrinal believes that studying "hands-on" vocational training courses will open up the doors for better employment opportunities for the *Jumma* people. As he explained,

*"I would like to see more Chakmas moving out of CHT. I encourage other Chakmas or Jummas to come to Australia and study some technical /hands-on subjects like driving or a course in food and hygiene or nursing course. Nowadays, I even advise my relatives in Bangladesh not to go for the general education of doing BA or MA. What is the use of having so many MA/BA pass people in the society? So many bekars (unemployed) is not doing any good to us. We should try to get kids in Vocational technical courses so that when they come here, or go to other developed countries, they find jobs easily".*

Juni, on the other hand, believed moving out of the CHT brings many benefits, but at the same time, she is hopeful that these diasporic communities would educationally and financially contribute to preserving Chakma culture and identity.

*"I feel very happy to see there are so many Chakmas now in Dhaka or Chittagong owning flats, apartments, having their own cars, and doing so well. So, if we become financially strong, I*

*think we will survive. Power comes from financial freedom or emancipation. If these established people and we, the immigrants, help the poor, no one will be able to erase us. But politically, it's a terrible situation. They are very rigid. I have trust and hope for the future. Something has to happen, but I don't know when or how it will happen".*

Juni appeared to be visibly frustrated when she was talking about the future of the CHT. There was a strong degree of sadness in her tone when saying that she did not know how to convince these "rigid" politicians and the military to recognise the sufferings of the *Jumma* people. Here, Juni and Babu compare the situation in Australia and New Zealand, where both countries are gradually recognising, and accepting the wisdom, knowledge, way of life, and sustainable cultures of indigenous peoples. They believe it is happening because over many years, "Aussies and Kiwis have been educated and trying to learn about their original inhabitants", however, they are concerned because the Bengalis will probably never be that educated considering the hostile and discriminatory ways Chakmas are portrayed in the society.

Although like Nanadhon, Juni is hopeful of the future of the CHT, she is reluctant to believe that either the settlers or the army are genuinely willing to make any changes. It is a very well-known fact that they are supported by the Bangladeshi government. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the situation will change. Despite the Peace Accord, the armed conflict continues at a low level. The presence of the army is still very high. In fact, participants believe it is even more prominent than before. The demographic changes they have observed over the years are, in Babu's words, "simply horrific". Conflicts over land are far from being settled. There seem to be still many obstacles towards peace in the CHT; consequently, people continue to feel a high level of insecurity.

#### 4.4.3.3 Demand for Indigenous/Adivasi Recognition

All participants seemed very aware of the politics behind the Bangladeshi Government's reluctance to give the *Jumma* people the Indigenous status. Most of them either follow current affairs regarding conferences, forums on social media or are personally involved in Indigenous rights politics. Although some admitted that they did not know the concept of Indigenous rights while growing up, they realised later, particularly after immigration, that it is crucial to be recognised as Indigenous Peoples in the CHT to protect their land, culture, nature, and overall, their identity. Babu believed,

*"The Bangladeshi government does not want to recognise us as because it will have to give us certain rights. The international organisations, like UN organisations that work for Indigenous People's rights, will put pressure on the government, as stated in the Indigenous Rights Forums. I spoke to the king a few years ago. He is trying hard to get this recognition to protect us. I*

*don't believe there's any malicious intention from the King or the people as some of the Bengalis think".*

Recognition of Indigenous/Adivasi has been an important political agenda in CHT politics. The various Governments have been categorically denying the demand on the one hand and coming up with new pejorative names for the minorities, on the other hand. Both Indigenous and Adivasi are frequently used in social media by human rights activists, such as on private television channels (not government-owned) or in newspapers, although it is officially forbidden to use the terms. It appears that just like many other contested issues, such as the terms Bangladeshi/Bengali/Muslim, having one unified proper name or term for the people in the CHT has become problematic and a contested political issue in Bangladesh. It remains neither a straightforward demand nor an answer to grant Indigeneity to the CHT people, and that was clearly reflected within the participants' views. As Gita said,

*"The Indigenous identity appeared not long ago, maybe 15 years ago only? Honestly, I still don't understand it much. To me, I like being identified as Hilly or Pahari or Chakma or Jumma. See, I grew up knowing I'm Upo-jati. I even had to prove my Upo-jati status when I was applying for scholarships. Later on, I came to know about other terms that we hear very often now. It's a very good thing that people are learning about it, and if we can secure safety, then we should be recognised as Indigenous".*

This new trend is part of a global trend in recent decades. Hundreds of marginalised minorities have positioned themselves as Indigenous Peoples to access the rights and political spaces accorded to them by international rights law. Babu tells me that in 2016, an advisor to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Bangla that the people demanding their identity as Indigenous is not valid since their lifestyle, mode of cultivation and cultural activities are similar to the people in the Philippines and Cambodia throughout history, therefore, how are they Indigenous to Bangladesh? This Devi calls a "ridiculous comparison". Yet this is a common attitude of most if not all Bangladeshi people; by geographically distancing them to the Philippines and Cambodia which are relatively far away from each other and Bangladesh, they are implying the CHT people are not the original inhabitants.

It is not only an implication; by calling the Indigenous minorities *Upo-jati*, they would remain under the control of the Bangladeshi nation and its governments, whereas, Adivasi means original inhabitant, similar to the concept of the *Bumiputera* in Malaysia and Brunei (sons of the soil) or the *Orang Asli* (as in Indonesia). All the participants believe Bengalis are afraid that the CHT people will secure certain international rights if given the Indigenous recognition, which will enable them to protect their

interests and advance them towards gaining their demands of autonomy, and has been a demand since the birth of Bangladesh.

The treatment the Adivasis received from the nation-state of Bangladesh and its many governments over the years regarding the demands of Indigenous recognition can only be classified as a hegemonic approach (Gramsci, 1994). However, the government often uses the Indigenous Peoples and their cultures to promote Bangladesh as an ethnically/culturally diverse country. For example, the tourism industry would use pictures of *Jumma* women weaving or bathing in rivers wearing traditional, colourful costumes to attract tourists, or simply put pictures of the hilly areas, dense forests, and fountains – some of which exist only in the CHT. In reality, however, the media representation of the Jummas in Bangladesh tells a different story. Firstly, the majority of the Bengali people believe Adivasis in the CHT are “outsiders and separatists, which is of course a *bhranto dharona* wrong idea, but media shows us that way” as Mrinal explains. Participants believe *Jummas* are wrongly represented, and most news is fabricated, hiding the reality. Therefore, this shows that media representation of the Jummas is intrinsically biased, taking on an orientalist view, as per Said (1978), favouring the dominant community – what they want to see/hear is represented, creating a hegemonic identity in Bangladeshi culture over the powerless, weaker minorities.

All participants believed that to get Indigenous/Adivasi recognition they must work with other diasporic *Jummas* to make this demand stronger and powerful. They strongly advocate for a “united *Jumma* overseas community,” as Babu said, to pressure the Bangladeshi government, particularly the *Jummas* living in developed Western countries. For example, working collaboratively in raising global awareness and supporting those who are working for *Jummas*, such as Chandra Kalindi Roy, the sister of Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy, who is Chief of the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Participants are aware of her relentless work as a consultant and researcher on the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, including her ongoing work towards the Bangladeshi *Jummas*’ Indigenous recognition. At the same time, participants also wish to continue working towards creating scope for more education opportunities for the disadvantaged by sponsoring or donating money or in any other way possible. They appeared to believe that *Jummas* might never get recognised as Indigenous/Adivasis without international pressure, which will eventually be “extremely harmful” for the *Jummas*’ existence in the future.

#### 4.4.3.4 Minorities within a Minority

One important finding of this research was how the participants showed a greater sense of awareness of other not-so-educated Bangladeshi ethnic minorities and how, in some ways, the Chakmas have also been in powerful and privileged positions within the CHT. During the focus group discussion, participants discussed this particular aspect of their privileged position among the 13 Bangladeshi

ethnic minorities, and many Chakmas have taken advantage of their majority position. This was a critical reflection of their own positioning, for instance, both Babu and Gita reflected on how in the CHT, most Chakmas expect the other ethnic communities to learn the Chakma language, Chakma songs and be familiar with cultural matters, just as all minorities have to learn Bengali.

It seems that particularly because of their experience of living in Australia and the way people treat and respect each other, the participants realised what Chakmas have done towards other minorities has been problematic. They spoke extensively about how the Chakmas have treated the other minorities unfairly. Mrinal and Gita shared some experiences of how they became aware of these “unfortunate behaviours [in which] they also took part unknowingly”. Gita says, if a Chakma girl is darker, we call them *tibire chehara* a reference to the Tripura, who are typically of darker complexion (therefore, not considered pretty).

Mrinal shared in the FGD that a Tripura friend of his, a Monash graduate, now a university professor in Bangladesh, suddenly stopped speaking Chakma, which surprised and angered some Chakma friends. Mrinal admits he got rather upset about the whole incident but later on realised his Tripura friend’s viewpoint, and he apologised to his friend, which Mrinal describes as, “like a bingo moment for him”, an epiphany of how Chakmas have been suppressing the other minorities – a practice that needs to change. He elaborates that marriage between the communities is rarely welcome. Marrying “them” was considered degrading, unwanted, simply because “they weren’t considered as good as Chakmas”. However, Gita pointed out recently, she has observed inter-community marriages are being increasingly welcomed and accepted, a sign of promoting a collective *Jumma* identity among the communities.

Mrinal believes there are some “solid reasons” why Tripuras and Marmas in particular “don’t like us as much” and believes there were two particular reasons why the Tripuras “accuse us of not being fair”. First, when the *Shanti Bahini* were active, no representatives from other communities except the Chakmas held important and senior positions despite having some highly educated Tripuras and Marmas in the Bahini. Secondly, there were a number of communal attacks by the Muslim settlers and the army where the majority of the victims were Tripuras; however, the media and the Chakmas focused on the Chakma victims, therefore, ignoring the Tripuras. Because this type of ongoing behaviour has continued for such a long time, it has created “resistance” among the other communities against the Chakmas.

Some participants also believed that the reason behind Chakmas having advanced in education with a much higher literacy rate is because they are more afraid of losing the CHT than the two other major minority communities, Tripuras and Marmas. Tripuras have the support of the Tripura *Rajjyo* state in



India, and they have always had a strong relationship with the Indian Tripuras. For example, the Tripura king from the Tripura *Rajjyo* visited the CHT Tripuras a few times, showing support and tight bonding towards the CHT Tripuras. On the other hand, Marmas are closely connected with the Burmese people in Burma/Myanmar, and they can seek refuge if something does happen to the CHT peoples, whereas Chakmas have no such places to go and therefore, they are “more involved and desperate to protect the CHT and its land” as Mrinal says.

Participants believe “tolerance and willingness” on the part of Chakmas, being the majority within the minorities, should be practised in most spheres of life. Otherwise, the other minorities, especially the rising Tripuras, will create “disharmony” in the CHT. In this regard, Babu puts it succinctly that,

*“We must forget division among us. We need to be united with all the other communities. Education helps us to realise that we need to be empathetic and practising kindness to all beings is the way to have a harmonious life among all ethnic minorities in the CHT and in the world”.*

Participants also discussed the notion that Chakmas in the CHT should “really educate themselves to be united” as there are at least four factions who are fighting with each other and bringing both “shame and deaths” in the CHT region. Babu was particularly vocal and critical about the positioning of these groups by saying that,

*“We cannot even co-exist with each other. Because of greed, Chakmas are now killing each other for money. Openly, they blame the settlers and the army for creating chaos, but behind the scene, they are working for them. Otherwise, where are they getting these guns and weapons! It’s really time we look at ourselves, and we need to stop playing this blame game. I don’t understand why they can’t see that they’re just the putul puppet of the army”.*

Mrinal and Gita point out another important issue that is responsible for this chaos or disharmony. They believe Bangladesh is going through a shocking phase of *shamajik obokkhoy* moral degradation, and the Chakma youth are not excluded from it. Devi reminisced when she was young, she felt comfortable trusting “unknown Chakma men,” knowing that they will not harm her in any way. But these days, that trust is disappearing. She says,

*“Sadly, we have learnt the bad things from the Bengali culture that now even the Chakma men are raping Chakma women. I have never heard such things happening in the CHT in my life, so they are learning and imitating these bad things from social media and from the settlers”.*

Gita, in this regard, believes the true purpose of education is neither being achieved nor served among the Chakma youths in the CHT. She also believes moral values are degrading and that these young

Chakmas are stepping into the luring “*Fhands traps*” of the army and the Bangladeshi government, a process of “systematic destruction and elimination of the Chakmas and creating mistrust among the *Jummas*” as Gita says, and sadly, they are achieving their goals.

Nanadhon, however, stands out with his optimism and belief that these issues are “*khonosthayee* short lived” and that the *Jummas* need to focus on education and to become financially solvent – a combination of these two will eventually help the young people to realise and “come to their senses” for their own betterment and to work towards peace of the *Jumma* people. His statement reminded me of the statement made by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, in 2012 on the culture of peace, ‘Through education, we teach children not to hate. Through education, we raise leaders who act with wisdom and compassion. Through education, we establish a true, lasting culture of peace’ (Ban, as cited in A. K. Chowdhury, 2016).

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the first generation Chakmas in Melbourne are very much in touch with their home, the CHT. Despite living here for several years, they keep thinking about the future of not only the Chakmas but also the other Indigenous communities and how to help them build a better future.

#### 4.4.4 Summary of Level Two Analysis

In this section, I have presented the three major findings in the form of three themes. While the participants told their individual stories, there were commonalities between their experiences and their responses to certain questions. There were also discrepancies in their experiences as immigrants and as males and females. In the next section, I present the third level - capstone analysis through a summary of the three themes and how they are connected in helping me answer my research question, as illustrated below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Summary of main findings of thematic analysis

<b>Theme 1</b> <b>The Role of Education in Upward Mobility and Security</b>	<b>Theme 2</b> <b>The Role of Education in Preserving Culture in Diaspora</b>	<b>Theme 3</b> <b>The Role of Education in the Role of Advocacy in Diaspora</b>
<b>Sub-themes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calling Australia home</li> <li>• Adjustment with career</li> <li>• Experiencing racism in Australia</li> <li>• Women becoming empowered in diaspora</li> </ul>	<b>Sub-themes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of the Chakma language</li> <li>• Importance of social networks – meetings and gatherings</li> <li>• Fear of losing culture/tradition</li> <li>• Hyphenated identities</li> <li>• Religion as an invisible marker of identity</li> </ul>	<b>Sub-themes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The politics of nomenclature</li> <li>• Peace in the CHT: Pessimism about the prospect</li> <li>• Demand for Indigenous/Adivasi recognition</li> <li>• Minority within minority</li> </ul>

## 4.5 Level Three: Capstone Analysis

From the above second-level analysis of the three findings of the thematic analysis, to answer my research question, the capstone analysis in summary below shows how the themes answer the research question:

*What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?*

Finding 1 first identified education as something that enabled the participants to immigrate to Australia as skilled migrants in the first place and/or enabled them to find upward social mobility as they settled here and called Australia home. Education has provided them with security and safety in life, both for themselves and for their children. There is no doubt that education has played a crucial role in the Chakma being able to immigrate to Australia as skilled immigrants. As discussed in Chapter 2, only people with proper qualifications and English proficiency are eligible to apply for temporary or permanent residency in Australia – Chakmas fall into that category. The primary reason for their immigration was to find a better and secure life that they did not consider they had in Bangladesh. Despite being Bangladeshi citizens, all seven participants have experienced discrimination, racism, insecurity, even fearing for their own life. After immigrating to Australia, it appears that despite experiencing “challenges, struggles, disappointments and sometimes frustrations,” as Juni says, they never regret deciding to have called Australia home. However, there are certain aspects they are concerned about, particularly when it comes to transmitting cultural norms and practices to the next and subsequent generations of the Chakma.

Finding 2 shows that participants believe education has provided them an increased awareness of preserving several aspects of Chakma culture to be significant for their identity and how they wish to transmit them to the next generation. They consciously practise certain social norms and behaviours so that children learn by observing them; the parents make efforts in intergenerational cultural maintenance by creating spaces where they can meet as a community to practise Chakma culture, language, the sharing of traditional foods, and religious rituals. However, due to their small numbers, there is still a strong fear that Chakma culture, traditions, and overall Chakma identity may not be sustained intergenerationally unless more Chakmas immigrate to Australia. Even so, given the multicultural texture of Australian society, this is doubtful. Education has brought multiple benefits to the Chakmas, including upward social mobility and finding the secure life they have longed for; however, paradoxically, education also seems to have created the possibility of cultural loss. Further and longitudinal research is needed to establish whether the Chakma are able to maintain their Chakma identity abroad in the future.

Finding 3 discussed how Chakma culture and identity are closely related to the CHT and their politics in diaspora. Being recognised as Indigenous/Adivasi will play an important role in achieving the rights they have been fighting for. This would give them a collective voice, a way of seeing them as *subjects* rather than *objects*, assisting the subsequent generations overseas to visit their homeland. In attempts to achieve this, participants work with other Chakma diasporic communities in Sydney, the US, UK, Canada, and other countries, sharing news and information, hoping to retain a vibrant relationship with the CHT. It shows their engagement through complex interpersonal and intercultural relationships with both their host country and their country of origin – Bangladesh. The advancement in technologies, transport, communication and information, and the Internet has contributed immensely to the growth of transnational networks and virtual communities. Therefore, participants are hopeful, through this transnational connectedness, they will be able to maintain their culture and identity in diaspora.

However, participants are aware that there is a greater need to raise global awareness about the Chakma and for the development of the CHT; the diasporic Chakma communities can contribute in harnessing their commitment to gain due recognition for the Chakma by working together, particularly those living in developed, Western countries.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed account of the participants, their educational background, why they decided to migrate to Australia, the activities they are involved in personally and as a community in the hope to preserve Chakma culture and identity, their involvement with the other diasporic

Chakma/*Jumma* communities and what they wish for the CHT, its people and for the future generations in diaspora. It also presented three levels of analysis of the data and elaborated the themes that were drawn from the participant's narratives. Finally, the chapter concluded by showing the connection of education, educational achievements, culture maintenance in diaspora, and the advocacy role the Chakma take up in raising awareness nationally and internationally. The next chapter discusses the research findings of this study in relation to the literature and in doing so, inductively constructs the theoretical framework arising from this research.

# Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore a group of Chakma people's migration narratives and understand the role of education in their spatiotemporal journeys. Through this study, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how these Chakmas migrated to Melbourne, Australia, and their stories and experiences towards upward mobility through education and settlement processes in a first-world country like Australia. Additionally, I sought to identify how and what efforts they have been making in protecting and maintaining their Chakma culture, language, and identity, and their thoughts about the future of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and its people. I hoped that the conversations with the participants during the individual and focus group discussion would offer insights into where they belong/do not belong, how they are adjusting or integrating into the host society and what role education has played in their journey.

This chapter is divided into three parts: it first provides a summary of the main themes I found in the analysis of my data, followed by a discussion of the findings related to existing literature – the similarities and differences between my data and the literature – and finally, a beginning discussion of theories that provide some explanatory power to help me explain my findings. Even so, I have found that there is very little theorisation of the mobility experiences of peoples such as the Chakmas, something I will address in the final section.

I conducted two rounds of individual interviews and one focus group discussion with seven participants. The data were organised and analysed in three levels (Saldana, 2016) as reported in the previous chapter. First, open and axial coding were used to draw out the main themes; second, a cluster analysis of key themes was undertaken, and third, the second-level analysis was brought to the capstone analysis to answer my research question. This technique helped me narrow down the findings of the data as explained in section 3.6, so as to answer my main research question:

*What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?*

## 5.2 Summary of Main Themes

Overall, three distinct themes emerged related to the role of education in a group of Chakma's immigration stories in connection with the aspects of their educational experiences both in Bangladesh and in Australia. It was clear that education had helped the participants to migrate to a first-world country and to achieve upward mobility for a better and more secure life. Education has

enabled them to use their upward mobility to help and preserve their Chakma culture in diaspora, and they feel that Melbourne is their home. Finally, education has given them access to resources in a third<sup>1</sup> country and the confidence and a sense of empowerment to enter into conversations to advocate and highlight the failure of Bangladesh to fully recognise its Indigenous Peoples, which the Chakma people are demanding.

Apart from these themes, I also found that education is helping them to become more aware of preserving their culture; however, it is also eroding some aspects of their Chakmaness. Education has given them an empowered voice to analyse and critique the discriminatory practices against the people. It is a voice that they did not have in Bangladesh where they felt powerless. In diaspora now they can talk against the dominant power from a third country where they can advocate and promote rights for the peoples. I also understood that participants' lifelong wish for safety and freedom been achieved as a result of immigration to Australia only because of and through their educational achievements. In the next section, I will first summarise the three themes that I elaborated in the previous chapter.

### 5.2.1 Theme 1: Upward Mobility and Security

The first theme that emerged from the data about the role of education in the participating Chakmas' migration journey is their change of social status in the Chakma society back home and the security and freedom they enjoy in Melbourne – thanks to their educational achievements that helped them immigrate to Australia as skilled immigrants in the first place. I found that all participants decided to immigrate to Australia primarily because they wanted to have a *better* and a *secure* society where they could live; as Mrinal puts it, they dreamt of “having a dream of a good life without fighting for basic rights as a human” for them and their children. Upon returning home after completion of their degrees on AusAID scholarships, all participants, except Binu, experienced a life that was unsettling, *hozoborolo* messy and unruly, as Gita says. They also became more aware of being treated as inferior because they had seen what life could be in Australia and that, irrespective of one's ethnicity, everyone should be treated equally. Therefore, a secure life they can give to their children became an essential reason for leaving Bangladesh.

Data show both Australian degrees and Australian citizenship helped them immensely to improve the quality and standard of life, including the achievement of higher social status and prestige within the Chakma society, but at the same time, these brought with them some responsibilities. Firstly, I found that participants perceive education as the means through which they have been able to escape their marginalised position as *Upo-jati* sub-nation or *khudro-nrigoshthi* tiny-ethnicity with constant racial

---

<sup>1</sup> Australia is framed as a 'third' rather than 'second' country. This has been explained in Chapter 2

stereotyping and the need to flee violence. For example, most of them - Babu, Gita, Nanadhon, and Mrinal - give numerous examples of going through traumatic experiences resulting from multiple communal violence incidents between the army and the communities while growing up. They believe that because of these occurrences, their parents, among others in the Chakma society, instilled in them the importance of education to escaping the violence through university degrees and eventually getting proper jobs. Secondly, because of their secure life, participants feel empowered and view their identity as an asset in creating belongingness to Australia as a community, and they actively promote the belief that education is paramount for the communities for upward mobility. Finally, because of their Australian citizenship, participants feel they have earned an empowered voice to highlight the importance of education that can eventually lead many other Chakmas from the CHT to migrate overseas.

### 5.2.2 Theme 2: Preserving Culture in Diaspora

Another theme of this study is how Chakmas are trying their best to maintain, preserve, and enrich culture and traditions in Australia. All seven participants take enormous pride in their Chakma identity and as people showing gratefulness to families and the community for continuous support in their educational experiences both in Bangladesh and in Australia. It appeared that keeping Chakmaness alive in diaspora is their foremost priority, and several aspects are helping them to remain Chakma, even though there are only just over 100 Chakmas in Melbourne.

Three main factors are seen by them as contributing to preserving Chakma culture and identity. Firstly, they perceive oracy to be more important than literacy for the next generations of Chakmas. In other words, they aspire to develop in their children conversational competence in Chakma language at least, even if in a receptive way. They admit that it is unfortunate they cannot read and write in Chakma, although Devi, Nanadhon, and Mrinal are now learning the Chakma script *Ojapath* that is now available to be used on keyboards – thanks to the young group of innovative Chakmas who have created the layout of *Ojapath* to be downloaded on keyboards in digital devices.

Secondly, Chakmas in Melbourne try to preserve culture and identity through communal practices of frequent meetings and gatherings. Most Chakmas, if not all, try to come together twice a month or at least once in three weeks to show the children the *aspects* that make them Chakma. Also, for *Bizu* – the biggest cultural festival with historical relevance for the Chakma – is celebrated for three consecutive days (12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April), and almost without any exception, they rent a farmhouse, far from the city to gather and celebrate. Sometimes *Bizu* is celebrated with interstate and international visitors. This is also an occasion when they bring in artists and performers from the CHT, which Gita says is “one way of trying to keep the kids connected to their roots”.



Finally, Buddhism appeared to become a central part of the participants' Chakmaness, whereas religion was less of a factor for most of them while they were in the CHT because they would go to a *keyang* Buddhist temple on certain occasions to socialise with others. In Melbourne, however, Buddhism seems to act as an important marker in retaining Chakma identity. First, through this they differentiate themselves from the Bengalis, and second, what was largely insignificant once (because in the CHT, all Chakmas are Buddhist anyway), suddenly becomes very important, a trait that distinguishes them and consolidates their position as Chakmas.

### 5.2.3 Theme 3: The Role of Advocacy

The final theme of this study is the importance of the advocacy role the participants have taken through protests, rallies, and social media from a third country by taking part in these activities both individually and as a community. Participants believed that they did not have a proper channel to raise their concerns in Bangladesh simply because they were afraid of being legally prosecuted, harassed, or even abducted. However, now that they are in Australia, they feel empowered because they have freedom of speech and access to resources that were not available to them. They strongly feel the need to raise global awareness about the political situations and conditions of the minority communities with a sense of responsibility to help the people back home. They promote the importance of education in fighting against oppression and injustice. Most importantly, they see education as the only way to protect their culture and identity and free themselves from ongoing oppression, subjugation, and Islamisation.

There are four aspects to the role of advocacy that the participants consider of value. First, being recognised as Indigenous will bring certain rights to the people back in the CHT: it will help in defending their rights, in securing reprisal against combined attacks by the settlers and the army; and it will mean that women can better protect themselves from sexual harassment and physical attacks. Also, individuals must "voice up" for themselves rather than depending on others, such as Bengali human rights activists or NGOs. Again, only education can help them achieve that. Therefore, encouraging parents in rural areas to send children to school and take education seriously, participants believe, is extremely important.

Second, participants heavily criticise the derogatory terms the Bangladeshi government, Bengali people, and media keep using to refer to Chakmas and other ethnic minorities. Therefore, Chakmas demand and advocate the right to determine what to be called – to have the power and control of calling themselves Chakma *jati* and Indigenous Peoples and Adivasis. Third, participants show a greater awareness of other not-so-educated minorities and how, in some ways, the Chakmas have also been in powerful and privileged positions within the CHT. Their diasporic role as Chakma is to

*educate* other Chakmas by advocating social cohesion and not to imitate or mimic (Bhabha, 1994) Bengalis who have been oppressing the Indigenous People.

Finally, most participants share a sense of hopelessness and great concern about the future of the CHT and its people, as insecurity and weariness can be easily noticed in the community. Therefore, only by educating themselves, holding powerful positions in the society, and having a powerful voice to create pressure on the Bangladeshi government to *hear* them is the only way to retain the communities and preserve their cultures and identities. To achieve this, participants work with other diasporic Chakma communities such as in the US, Canada, the UK, South Korea to raise global awareness, strengthen the network outside Bangladesh or internationally about the true conditions of the CHT people, advocating the need to be recognised as Indigenous.

#### 5.2.4 Summary

The above section has summarised the three main themes arising from the thematic analysis of my data from two rounds of interviews and a focus group discussion. Table 5.1 shows these themes at a glance.

Table 5.1 Summary of main findings by theme

Theme 1: Upward mobility and security	Theme 2: Preserving culture in diaspora	Theme 3: Role of Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career advancement</li> <li>• Fear of loss of culture/tradition</li> <li>• Belonging/not belonging in diaspora</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Experiencing racism</li> <li>• Women's shifting roles and empowerment</li> <li>• Recognition, critiquing Bangladeshi government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness in preserving language/culture</li> <li>• Chakma and Indigeneity</li> <li>• Fear of loss of culture/tradition</li> <li>• Family and religious cohesion</li> <li>• Role of Buddhism</li> <li>• Belonging/not belonging in diaspora</li> <li>• Women' shifting roles and empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging/not belonging in diaspora</li> <li>• Chakma and Indigeneity</li> <li>• Recognition, critiquing Bangladeshi government</li> <li>• Experiencing racism</li> <li>• Readjustments in identity</li> <li>• Minority within a minority</li> </ul>

Overall, when considering these three themes, it appears that education has played multiple roles in the participants' migration journey. Coming to Australia as skilled immigrants and escaping their marginalised positions, they have found safety and security in life. Education has enabled them to realise the paramount importance of protecting and maintaining their Chakma culture and identity.

Most importantly, education has given them an empowered voice to advocate recognition and rights, to pinpoint and highlight the failure of Bangladesh to recognise its people. In the next section, I discuss my findings as they relate to the existing literature.

## 5.3 Discussion

Moving from Chapter 4, where I presented an in-depth thematic analysis of transcripts from the interviews and the focus group discussion, I now address my research question – What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story – as it is related to what was previously known from research. In doing so, first, I discuss what I found that confirms previous research.

### 5.3.1 Confirming Findings from Previous Studies

There are many similarities between some of my findings and those that have been reported by studies conducted on immigrants' experiences and settlement processes, which I describe and compare in the next section. However, it has to be noted that because this is an inductive study, no findings will exactly match previous findings because of the foundational differences in the methodology and the fact that the case is about the Chakma individuals and aspects of their particular cultural identity, which are always unique.

#### 5.3.1.1 Increased Awareness in Preserving Language and Culture

All seven participants placed great importance on maintaining and preserving Chakma culture, Chakma traditions, and overall, Chakma identity. In Bangladesh, education enabled the Chakmas to show heightened awareness in preserving their Chakma culture and tradition, and they carry that awareness even more in diaspora. They spoke about the various ways of putting constant efforts into intergenerational cultural maintenance. They are aware of important aspects of speaking *matribhasha* mother tongue, and that the mother tongue is closely related to personal, social, and cultural identity. Additionally, they see many benefits in speaking more than one language, especially when it comes to employment.

Nanadhon, for example, believes that,

*“We live in a technologically advanced, multicultural, globalised world, and one day our kids will travel to other countries or even live in other countries just like us. So, it’s really important to be bilingual or multilingual, whether it’s Chakma or Japanese. Employers prefer people who are not monolingual”*

Nanadhon’s explanation echoes findings from a study conducted in the United States by Lao (2004) on 86 Chinese immigrant parents where the majority of parents strongly believed that children could have practical advantages from speaking two languages, including better employment opportunities,

efficient communication within their ethnic community, and better self-identity. This also echoes two other studies on Korean (Park & Sarkar, 2007) and Tibetan immigrants (Choedon, 2016) in Canada, where parents strongly support their children's heritage language maintenance to keep their cultural identity through the Korean and Tibetan languages. This is consistent with findings reported in previous research on ethnic language maintenance and revitalisation among other immigrant communities in Australia and also in countries such as Canada, the UK, and the US (see, for example, Cairns & Williams 1986; Clyne, 1985; Kipp, Clyne & Pauwels, 1995; Clyne, 1985). This relationship between language and identity could be explained because language is one of the most important factors for preserving ethnic identity in multilingual countries like Australia, given that language provides us with ways of thinking that are peculiar to the culture/s that have helped develop the words, grammar, and rhetoric of the language (Cavallaro, 2005). Chakmas are no exception in thinking about the importance of preserving their language.

As discussed in Chapter 4, some participants revealed feeling embarrassed and ashamed for not learning the Chakma alphabet. Nanadhon spoke extensively about the importance of literacy,

*"I feel terrible that I can't read and write in Chakma, considering we have our own Chakma alphabets. In the past, I tried many times to read and write the Chakma language: I had books, and now there are many online materials. But we are so busy and don't have time to learn our own language - I feel terrible. If my son doesn't even speak it, it would be terrible. Some day in the future, I will learn how to read and write in Chakma".*

There are indeed many online materials and YouTube videos that have made it possible for the diasporic Chakmas to learn the Chakma alphabet. In December 2019, the Chakma language was recognised by UNESCO and added to Gboard (YouTube) after the Indian diasporic Chakmas lobbied and worked with Microsoft, Google, and UNESCO. Since then, YouTube video channels have been established both in Bangladesh and India including the 'Chakma Language Online School' which offers online classes by a group of young Chakma enthusiasts to teach how to install the Chakma alphabet on a keyboard and smartphones. There are numerous short videos with instructions that describe their aim to reach all Chakmas in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and the diasporic Chakmas who have settled in other countries. Nanadhon, Devi, and Mrinal are now in the process of learning the language, and they wish to teach their children in the *keyang* when it starts operating fully. Eventually, Babu plans to open a "Sunday school" just like the Bengali communities have built 'Bangla schools' in the Eastern and Western suburbs in Melbourne.

This finding was discussed in my second theme under preserving culture in diaspora (Table 5.1).

### 5.3.1.2 Fear of Loss of Chakma Culture and Tradition

Although participants are aware of the importance of preserving Chakma culture and tradition, due to their small numbers, they all share a strong fear that Chakma language, culture, traditions, and overall Chakma identity may not be sustained intergenerationally unless more Chakmas immigrate to Australia. Chakmas in New York (Gerharz & Land, 2018) and Chakmas in France (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016) share a similar fear because of the small number of Chakmas in both cases. However, such a loss does not mean complete loss or loss in an irreversible way because culture is fluid and certainly not quantifiable or even tangible, but manifested through cultural practices that would include transferring Chakma values to the next generation, such as getting involved in rituals including religion. For instance, Mrinal said,

*“... We try so hard to make sure that kids speak in Chakma but they tend to always answer in English, sometimes it’s actually heartbreaking that I cannot have a proper conversation in my language, but that’s the reality, what can you do!”*

It is clear from such conversations and from previous research that diasporic ethnic minorities see language and culture as inseparable (Hall, 1994). Indeed, it is not only language that participants worry about; Gita thinks her daughters ultimately will lose cultural and religious aspects of Chakmaness. She gives a specific example of her daughter not “showing respect” to the *Shongodana* offering to Buddha for her father’s death. The daughter kept saying she was “bored and wiggling”, asking when it was going to end. Gita says, “if only she grew up in the CHT, she’d understand just by seeing these practices – it wouldn’t be a question, I wouldn’t have to even explain, ever. It’s actually really frustrating”. Here Gita sees religious practices as part of the Chakma culture that she wants her daughters to learn by seeing and observing her practices, although she often fails to engage them.

According to Berry (2006), generally, immigrants expect or would prefer their children to follow their own ethnic, cultural values and beliefs, and identity in order to prevent assimilation into the host culture. The Chakmas likewise show similar beliefs; however, the participants of this study also believe that they should not “push” their children to be “too Chakma, which might end up putting children in a disadvantaged position” with pull-push forces in their settlement process (Asghari-Fard & Hossain, 2017). Data show these Chakma parents use their experiences when they moved to Dhaka or other bigger cities for better education and show greater awareness that not “fitting in” properly could be harmful in adapting to a new culture and that they can hopefully maintain both cultures just like the salad bowl metaphor (see Section 2.5.2.3) where multiple elements or ingredients of multiple cultures can coexist and retain their textures/cultural elements after mixing all the ingredients (Liu, 2015).

The above comments by Mrinal and Gita show that education has brought multiple benefits to the Chakmas, including upward social mobility and finding the secure life they have longed for. However, paradoxically, education also seems to have created the possibility of cultural loss. Further and longitudinal research is needed on whether the Chakma will be able to maintain their Chakma identity abroad in the future.

This finding was reported under two of my themes of upward mobility and security and preserving culture in diaspora (Table 5.1).

#### 5.3.1.3 Family and Religious Cohesion

Data show that family cohesion, religious affiliation, and practice play a vital role in preserving Chakma identity in diaspora. Family cohesion appeared to be the most important pillar to increase feelings of belonging within the family and community, and within that, religion plays a big role. Collective community identity seems more important and sacred than the feelings of the individual. Therefore, Chakma identity is very much connected to the group, particularly family. For example, Gita believes, “We have to start teaching the kids how to be Chakma at home, and then when they meet the other Chakma children they can connect, associate and feel like they belong to a community”. Family relationships operate as a social institution for members of the diasporic and transnational communities and help them to manage the transformative experiences and adapt to their lives and new societies (Schulz & Hammer, 2003). This family cohesion is also associated with the concept of a collective culture where family is considered the most important pillar in the structure of the society to increase feelings of belonging within the community, which is certainly the case for the Chakmas.

This finding is similar to two studies, one conducted by Gerharz and Land (2018) on diasporic Chakmas in New York where the community ‘stick together’ to reaffirm ‘similar roots and feelings of belonging together’ (p. 9), showing enclavism. Second, the study by K. Chakma and Hill (2016) on the Chakmas in France also shows that these Chakmas keep very close connections with each other. This meant that members of the Chakma community identify themselves as a collectivist society with strong ties to family and society, often through religion and especially when they communicate with each other. Family cohesion and intergenerational connectivity can be manifested in many ways; among them, one of the strongest markers of cultural practice is religion. This is also similar to the Tibetan diaspora, where the Dalai Lama and his followers believe that having a unified identity is vital in maintaining traditions.

Similar to the Chakmas in Melbourne, the Chakmas in New York also view their relationship with the Bengalis as superficial, and one is viewed with suspicion if one becomes too attached to the Bengalis or is seen frequently visiting the Bengalis. They also believe Buddhism separates them from the

Bengali Muslims; after the 9/11 twin tower incident, Muslims across the world have been associated with terrorism, and Chakmas differentiate themselves from such negative perceptions by revealing that they are not Muslims, but Buddhists, therefore *gom* better than their fellow Bengalis. Chandralal, a participant in Gerharz and Land's (2018) study, almost exactly echoes Mrinal in this study when he said, "we are gradually becoming a minority in our own land, what they are doing is unforgivable", revealing distrust that is so deeply seated in the Chakma/*Jummas*' core beliefs that it seems very unlikely to disappear or change no matter how far they move from the CHT.

This finding was discussed in the second theme, preserving culture in diaspora (Table 5.1).

#### 5.3.1.4 Career Advancement

For some participants, their career advancement was more rewarding and satisfying in Australia than in Bangladesh and other countries. For example Babu, Devi, Binu, and Nanadhon managed to find suitable and professional jobs with 'upward occupational mobility' (Chiswick, Lee, & Miller, 2005, p. 348). Although they had some initial struggles during the settlement process, they believe they are in better positions than they were in Bangladesh. I found that these four participants initiated both formal and informal strategies for their success. For example, Nanadhon, Binu, and Devi researched the Australian job market and built connections in LinkedIn that helped them meet their prospective employers. Binu revealed, "because of my LinkedIn profile, I got a job just three months after I moved to Melbourne; I didn't expect that I'd get a job that easily. It's so important to use technology and make connections these days". Like Binu, Devi too had found her current employment through social media. They are enjoying career growth, and at the same time, both women are studying part-time to go "as far as possible career-wise" as Devi puts it.

This kind of multiple engagements is almost impossible in Bangladesh while working full-time and studying part-time. It is possible in Australia because of the social structure and the sense of economic freedom and choice; as Gita said jokingly, "you can live quite comfortably doing odd jobs and security comes from the social welfare mechanisms, which do not exist in Bangladesh".

This confirms the findings of Hartwich's (2011) study showing that skilled migrants have higher labour market participation than the overall population, and their unemployment rate is lower and their median full-time earnings are higher than their counterparts in Bangladesh because they know how the labour market works, and their English proficiency helps greatly. On the other hand, my previous study found that the majority of immigrants, although skilled, face greater hardship in securing employment, particularly from non-English speaking countries (U. Chakma, 2020).

The success of Devi and Binu can be attributed to their relatively younger age of immigration. Rajendran, Ng, Sears, and Ayub (2020) conducted extensive research on migrant career success in

Australia, and their findings show that people who migrated at a younger age with Australian qualifications are more likely to report an upward career move than those who migrated when they were older. Although this is true not only for Chakmas, it would also apply to local people who start working at an early age. An exception to this is Babu; because of his profession as a doctor, despite immigrating at a relatively older age than Devi and Binu, he found much higher career mobility.

This finding was reported in the first theme of my findings (Table 5.1).

#### 5.3.1.5 Belonging /Not Belonging

I found that, except for Devi, other participants feel that Australia is their home now and that they truly feel a sense of belonging to the Australian society and its multicultural environment. This could be seen as an important element of identity construction. As Said (1984) explained, ‘the feeling of being rooted somewhere like you belong, is one of the most important needs of the human being’ (p. 53). It is extremely important for these Chakmas to feel, as they said, “a sense of belonging” (Babu, Binu, and Juni). Babu said, “I feel I’m a part of the Australian community – when I return from overseas, especially on the plane when we enter Australia, I really feel like I’m coming home”. They feel secure, safe, and enjoy the freedom, but most importantly, as Gita said, “Home is where family is”. Nevertheless, at the same time they all feel a strong connection to the CHT (rather than to Bangladesh, for most of them). It is noteworthy that this feeling goes beyond the formal status of domicile, such as *merely* having an Australian passport.

One explanation could be that skilled migrants get more opportunities to engage in mainstream cultures through their workplaces, and their English language proficiency helps them to integrate. Secondly, Babu, Juni, Nanadhon, and Gita feel a stronger connection to Australia compared to Devi and Mrinal, which is consistent with Berry and Hou’s (2016) study on first-generation immigrants’ sense of belonging in Canada, where they found that the longer migrants had resided, the more they were integrated into the host culture and country.

Another aspect of belonging/not belonging was connected to having multiple homes with multiple definitions and meanings of home, which were shifting and flexible. Participants frequently refer to the CHT as “back home”, and Melbourne as their “current home”. When they mention back home, there is a certain notion of nostalgia associated with their decision to emigrate, or sometimes home is associated with food, such as *tara*, a must-have vegetable for *Bizu pazon* mixed vegetable curry. Similar findings were reported in a large-scale study conducted by Bonnerjee, Blunt, McIlwaine and Pereira (2012) in London on diasporic communities in the UK. The study identified the concept of home having various meanings relating to safety, emotion, community, and religion. Moreover, these



authors found that home can even represent ‘community across borders, across places and across times’ (p. 59).

I found this factor of belongingness to Melbourne across all three themes in my findings (Table 5.1)

#### 5.3.1.6 Chakma and Indigeneity

Another finding that arose from the data was the relationship between the participants’ Chakmaness and Indigeneity. Despite their Australian citizenship and being away from home (the CHT) for many years, the Chakmas in Melbourne reveal that their first and original identity will *always* remain Chakma. They are very proud of their identity and, therefore, want official recognition of their Indigeneity, and they seemed to have taken it as a duty to educate others in Australia and other countries about the importance of recognition. For example, Gita said,

*“No matter where I live or how many years I stay apart from the CHT and my people, in my heart, I will forever remain Chakma – being Chakma is my pride, my identity, my heritage. I can’t get by without speaking Chakma or eating Chakma food. I dream in Chakma too, haha”...*

What Gita said is very similar to the significant finding of a study conducted by Visser and Gerharz (2016) about Chakma students who had left the CHT for higher education and moved to Dhaka, highlighting the view of the participants that they will forever remain Chakma. The participants in that study also uttered almost similar words to Gita’s, of being proud of their culture and proud of their abiding, deep connections with the CHT. We can see similar connectivity and belongingness among the 72 young children (reported by K. Chakma & Hill, 2016) who were adopted by French families after their Buddhist orphanage was burnt in 1979, with the finding that these children still keep regular contacts with the CHT and visit when possible as they have now grown up.

The above examples illustrate how Chakmas in Dhaka, Melbourne, and France continue to emphasise Chakmaness as a vital category of belonging since it provides them with what negative Bangladeshi views about them since the nation’s birth have failed to deliver. This belongingness to the roots or the CHT helps them in identifying their place in the world and, therefore, creates the notion of Indigeneity as an important signifier that allows an identity linked to a place to which they will always belong, but an identity that perhaps also requires negotiation between different and coexisting unique positions.

Indeed, Gerharz (2015) argues that Indigenous recognition in Bangladesh is gravely important in addressing issues related to structural inequalities, multiple discriminatory experiences, and the fear of being exterminated by the state. The government needs to implement appropriate policies to address these issues. Gerharz (2015) also argues that the relational approach of activism has the possibility to operate on multiple levels, from local to national and transnational, which will open up

new opportunities ‘to lobby for the recognition of minority rights, social inclusion, and alteration of existing inequalities’ (p. 117).

Most participants in this study believe that cross-ethnic alliances need to be stronger, regarding which Gerharz (2014) in her article on Bangladesh’s stand on Indigeneity argues that international donor communities have become more sensitive in recent years towards the plight of minorities. There is no denying that since the 1990s, activism in Bangladesh has gained new impetus (Gerharz, 2014), since The United Nations adopted the Rights of Peoples in 2007, which gave a strong sense of hope to the ‘educated’ *Jummas* and the activists.

Clifford (2013), in his book *Returns*, states that ‘the histories of survival, struggle and renewal’ became visible during the 1980s and 1990s (p. 7). He argues these processes of *becoming* have seen people ‘creating new pathways in a complex postmodernity’ (p. 7). Linda Smith (2013) very succinctly and eloquently explains that the process of becoming does not end when one acquires the level; it actually begins there. Therefore, just like for any other identity, Indigenous identity is an ongoing process of becoming. Irrespective of being recognised or not, ‘Indigeneity is rarely a primary identity of people’, according to Birrell (2016) - which is where Babu’s argument lies. He admits that this relatively new “*shorgoal* loud noise” about Indigenous recognition might bring some benefits to the *Jummas*, but it will not “sustain” Indigenous identity in a country like Bangladesh, where policies change continuously depending on the ruling party in the government. Babu’s strong advocacy is towards educating the jati – not only getting degrees, but educating the young generation with solid values of kindness and empathy. Indeed, he says, overall there is a greater need to raise the children as good human beings – these fundamental “*goon* positive characteristics” are terribly missing in the CHT and in the Bangladeshi society as a whole.

Volkan (1999) views a person’s core identity as linked to large-group identity. Solidarity with one’s large group is described as characteristics of individual identity, and sharing a sense of sameness with a large group provides a sense of belonging and protection. Similarly, for the Chakmas, Indigeneity gives them a platform to separate themselves from the Bengalis both in Bangladesh and even in diaspora.

I reported this connection of a strong sense of Chakmaness and Indigeneity in my second and third themes (Table 5.1.)

Now that I have discussed my data confirm findings from existing literature, in the next section, I will discuss what previous studies found but I did not find in my data.

### 5.3.2 Contradicting Findings from Previous Studies

I found that there are several aspects of my participants' experiences that do not conform to the findings from other studies: specifically, in the areas of the role of Buddhism, their views on career development, and their experience of racism in Australia. These are discussed below.

#### 5.3.2.1 The Role of Buddhism

Buddhism has been reported to play an important part in the two other studies on the Chakmas in New York (Gerharz & Land, 2018) and the Chakmas in France (K. Chakma & Hill, 2016), and Chakmas in South Korea (Taylor, 2011). However, when it comes to the religious affiliation and practising Buddhism among the Chakmas in these three countries and the Chakmas in Melbourne, there are significant differences. The majority of the Chakmas in New York were able to move to the United States through networks and connections with other Buddhist countries, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Korea, and Hong Kong. Buddhist networks provide them a sense of religious belonging where they find comfort within the broader Asian communities. On the other hand, Chakmas in France report that they occasionally visit *keyangs* to socialise with the other Chakmas, although it is often challenging because they all live in different cities.

However, Chakmas in Melbourne have taken Buddhism as a core part of their identity after immigration. Babu, for example, appeared to be dedicated to building a *Keyang* for the Bangladeshi Buddhists; he says, "Religion was not a huge factor, it was the other factors related to it, meeting friends, feeling a sense of peace inside the *keyang*". In addition, unlike the Chakmas in New York (Gerharz & Land, 2018), my participants separate themselves from other Buddhists because of the differences in practising Buddhism, differences between not only Theravada and Mahayana (two sects of Buddhism) praying rituals but also in the praying languages. Therefore, these differences of these two Chakma communities could be attributed to the fact that the circumstances under which they immigrated were vastly different. Melburnian Chakmas show confidence that they do not need to rely on others, such as broader Asian communities, to belong; perhaps, their social status and economic solvency with tenured jobs give them that confidence.

The Chakmas in South Korea, on the other hand, report that Korea being a historically Buddhist country, and because of racial similarity between the Chakmas and Koreans (relative to the Bengalis), they feel very much at home. Although there are initial struggles of not knowing the Korean language, they could integrate into the community particularly because of Buddhism.

This finding was discussed in theme two (preserving culture in diaspora) (Table 5.1) and in Chapter 4.

#### 5.3.2.2 Career Development

Two significant differences appeared under this theme when comparing Gerharz and Land's (2018) study on Chakmas in New York with the Chakmas in Melbourne. I found that contrary to the migration literature, which hypothesises that the 'ethnic enclave' might limit interactions with host country nationals and hinder the development of the exogenous ties necessary for career success (Ndhlovu, 2010; Rajendran, Ng, Sears & Ayub, 2020), my participants think living closer to other Chakmas, often in the same neighbourhood, helped them to become confident in interacting with locals and making stronger connections. One reason that this finding may have surfaced is because the other Chakma immigrants they interact with are also highly skilled, thereby enabling the development of social exchanges, creating deeper social ties that also lead to helping each other with better employment opportunities by recommending and sometimes introducing each other to prospective employers. Nanadhon believes, "We must help each other not only socially but finding better employment, and I also encourage young people to become business entrepreneurs so that we can help our people here and back home".

There are also significant differences when it comes to professional careers for the Chakmas in New York (Gerharz & Land, 2018) and in Melbourne. Most Chakmas in New York were found to be working multiple jobs to support their families and talk about 'dream jobs'; whereas my participants all hold professional jobs related to the subjects they have studied. This could be because of the differences in migration policies; Chakmas in Melbourne hold much better and more secure positions. Due to Australia's skilled migration system, when the Chakmas immigrated, they came with relatively high English proficiency and with at least a bachelor's degree from an Australian university, thanks to AusAID scholarships. On the other hand, Chakmas in New York immigrated through Buddhist networks and on diversity visas.

Education for the participants in this study acted as a potent means of encouragement and promotion of upward social mobility, which is promoted predominantly through propagation and the spread of education (Nazimuddin, 2014). The view in the developing countries is that generally, if not always, people who receive higher education achieve higher social status; and the possibility of a good life, participants, believed, is very strongly related to having a secure life with freedom and choice.

This particular aspect of career development was elaborated in the first theme (upward mobility) in Table 5.1.

#### 5.3.2.3 Experiencing Racism

In Australia, most studies conducted on immigrants' experiences report that the majority of the immigrants face racism and discrimination starting from linguistic racism because of their English

language proficiency or pronunciation (U. Chakma, 2020; Dovchin, 2019), religious affiliation and clothes (Asghari-Fard & Hossain, 2017), or their ethnicity and appearance (Ndhlove, 2010). These findings show that experiencing racism and discrimination affects immigrants' sense of belonging, as they feel rejected or unwanted by the larger society. However, when I asked my participants if they had experienced racism in Australia, all six participants, except Devi, answered that they had not. For example, Babu, the first among the participants to have immigrated to Australia, said,

*"I haven't experienced racism in the last 23 years in Australia, I've been posted to several country towns and cities but maybe because of my personality, people haven't treated me differently. I get treated respectfully wherever I go".*

Babu's experience of not feeling discrimination could be because of his profession as a medical doctor and the social status attached to this. Doctors in Australian society are generally considered smart, intelligent, and valuable (Siar, 2013). Chakmas not experiencing racism could also be attributed to two reasons: first, their experiences of discrimination as minority Chakmas in Bangladesh was so strong that they became more tolerant to what Devi called the "here and there subtle discrimination", with the result that they do not consider these acts discrimination. Secondly, they feel safe and secure in Melbourne, not feeling threatened because of their appearance as "Asian"; they are seen as being part of the sprawling Asian community in Melbourne.

However, this also could be because of optics – they do not see the subtle discrimination because culturally, Australia is vastly different from Bangladesh – political correctness about what to say and what not to say in an egalitarian society are highly valued and widely practised. In contrast, in Bangladesh, with the Bengalis, it is more explicit, in-your-face, rude, impolite, where people do not hide their feelings towards ethnic minorities, examples of which I presented in chapter 4. Therefore, coming from that kind of experience, the under-the-garb, hidden racism is likely not always very obvious to the Chakmas in Melbourne.

This feeling of not experiencing racism could also be attributed to the fact that Chakmas' identity is not only shaped by family, religion, or social backgrounds, but also their internalised memory of the injustice, discrimination, and oppression that they had experienced while growing up in the CHT or experiencing racial discrimination for those who grew up outside the region, which they carry with themselves when they move to Melbourne. This seems to have been frozen into their Chakma sensibilities in a way that makes it almost undetachable from their sense of self, even in diaspora.

Not experiencing racism was discussed in the first and third themes (Table 5.1) and in Chapter 4.

In the next section, I will discuss the findings that emerged from my data, which, to my knowledge, have not been reported in previous research literature.

### 5.3.3 Unique Findings

In addition to the two categories reported above, a third one is where themes emerged, or topics came out of the data that, to my knowledge, have not been reported in any previous studies, not only on the Chakma but also on other minority diasporic communities around the world. While these might not be entirely unique or idiosyncratic to the Chakmas, in the scholarly literature this is the first time they are being reported. They may or may not be representative of Chakmas per se but could be a broader representation of other minorities, and further studies will need to be conducted to establish that.

#### 5.3.3.1 Readjustments in Identity

Data show the tendency of some participants to completely skipping from their Bangladeshi national identity of 'Chakma-Bangladeshis' to 'Chakma-Australians' and then sometimes to 'Australian-Chakmas' where the previous *national* identity gets completely obliterated. They end up where their current citizenship and their ethnic identity combine into a new space at the cost of getting rid of their previous nationalistic identity of 'Bangladeshi'. For instance, Devi said,

*"I don't want anything to do with Bangladesh, I never felt like a true Bangladeshi in my life. The country where I faced racism and discrimination as soon as I started school, I was only a child, and I was made to feel different".*

Previous literature has not, to my knowledge, reported such an erasing of past nationality where there is a total loss of the fundamental aspect of their identity. This could be because when we talk about belongingness or being a part of a country, it is not always reflective of one's official citizenship or a passport, but how they are treated by that country. Bangladesh, for Devi, has failed to provide that sense of belonging, and to its people to a certain extent. Australia, on the other hand, seems to have brought a profound sense of security for all of them; as Mrinal uttered, "Becoming Australian citizens was the ultimate goal, that's why we came here, to give a secure life to our children. Finally, we can relax and travel with a powerful passport"; consequently, they would rather be Chakma Australians, erasing their connectivity to Bangladesh.

Another possible reason behind this could be that the Bangladeshi nationality has connotations of them being secondary citizens, being non-Muslims, being the minority. All of that together, may have made them readily skip the intermediary nationalistic identity and directly connect their ethnicity to their current citizenship status. This made them feel empowered. For example, Devi said, "Whenever we travelled from Dhaka to Rangamati, within the same country, it just felt like I was travelling to my

country (CHT) from a different country (Dhaka)”. It is surprising because both Mrinal and Devi have been in Melbourne for six only years, yet they revealed they are more Australians than they are Bangladeshis.

This point was elaborated in theme three under role of advocacy (Table 5.1).

#### 5.3.3.2 Women’s Shifting Roles

My data show that the four women participants in this study show a greater shift in their positions in society compared to men in two important aspects that were not reported in previous literature. First, they were the primary applicants for immigration to Australia; therefore, they brought in their husbands and family. This position seems to have challenged the traditional family structure that has been based on gender differences among the Chakma in three major areas; first, more authority in decision making both within the household and outside – education and knowledge of equality have given them the power of expression and the ability to solve problems through their views and ideas. For example, Devi who is the main income earner with a permanent job, while her husband is in-between jobs, says,

*“I have to get up early to go to work because I take the train and I make lunch for myself and for my son. So, usually my husband cooks dinner because otherwise, I would be too tired and it’s not fair. Traditionally, you know, Chakma boys are so spoilt but he has learnt to cook, do groceries, take care of our son when I’m not around and all men should. We don’t have buas maids here”.*

What Devi expects from her husband is neither unfair nor unrealistic in Australia, and certainly not just for the Chakmas. However, she would not expect the same had they been in Bangladesh. The relationships between men and women seem to have changed after migration, and to some extent, patriarchy has altered or reconstituted gender roles.

Second, there is among the women a strong sense of self-worth; a shift from heavy to almost no reliance on husbands/men in life tasks; and a gladness at having the opportunity to do something good for the girls/women back home both in raising awareness about social justice, economic security and overall women’s empowerment. Promoting women’s self-worth, ability to determine their own choices, and the right to influence social changes for themselves and others are key points these four women want to see their daughters achieve in Australia and also the girls in the CHT. Juni, in this regard, says,

*“As a mother of two girls, I’m very aware that we need to promote education, especially for girls. Only educated mothers can bring changes in society. So, if we want the Chakma jati to prosper, it’s really paramount that we educate our daughters”.*

Similar to Devi, Binu also enjoys the overturned, dynamic gender relationship in their spousal relationship by using *Mui* I instead of *Ami* us while describing what she has achieved in the last five years. Binu also added, “I am so glad that we are in Australia where people do not ask rude questions like when I am going to have kids, I will decide when I’ll have kids, just like I decided when to get married”. She is aware she would have had to face “too many questions” if they were in Bangladesh, now that she is 36 years old, married with no children.

Both Binu and Devi purchased houses as primary applicants and this status of relative autonomy seems to have added strength to their voice. Indeed, it seems the circumstances they have found themselves in post-migration have contributed to adjustments in family and couple relationships that would be rather unacceptable in the CHT or in Bangladesh.

The aspect of women’s shifting roles and women empowerment was discussed in themes one and two (Table 5.1).

#### 5.3.3.3 Minorities within a Minority

*“You can see nowadays that the Tripuras are getting much higher positions in the society as well as in Government official roles, such as there’s a Tripura minister now and you can feel the sentiment they carry against us. Although it’s not hostile, you can feel that they don’t like us that much” – Babu*

No literature, to my knowledge, has addressed this important aspect of critically reflective self-awareness and self-critiquing regarding the power relation dynamics that exist in the CHT among minority communities. I believe this is a very important finding of this research. In considering critically their own relatively advantageous position in the community, the participants showed a greater sense of awareness of other not-so-educated minorities and realised how, in some ways, Chakmas have also been in powerful and privileged positions within the CHT. During the focus group discussion, an evolving yet unforeseen topic was how Chakmas, being the majority among the 13 minorities, have been taking advantage of their majority position. Indeed, it appeared that some of the ways Chakmas have been treated by the Bengalis had been manifested in the way they treat or perceive the other minorities.

Gita pointed out that some Chakmas hold racist views towards others, even twisting their names, “We call Tripuras ‘Tibire’ and Marmas ‘Mok’ and we even associate their darker skin colour with not being



beautiful”. Devi added that Chakmas need to self-educate themselves and treat everyone else equally with respect, if they want to live harmoniously in order to resist the “social, economic, and religious *agrasion* encroachment of the Bengalis in the CHT”. Participants believe that all communities need to come together to raise their voices and to be able to determine their own fate, gain power over their land and the CHT.

It seems particularly because of their experiences of living in Australia, how people treat and respect each other made them realise that what Chakmas have done towards other minorities is problematic. Mrinal and Gita shared some experiences of becoming aware of these “unfortunate behaviours I also took part in unknowingly” (Gita). Mrinal added, “In absence of Bengali friends we would always converse in Chakma as they all spoke our language; we took it for granted”. Now he realises that he was wrong to do so. Their knowledge about racism, being exposed to egalitarian societies like Australia helped them to be critical about their own actions. Juni particularly talked about how she tries to make her relatives understand that treating others with respect is very important in order to receive respect.

As Gita said, “Education has brought us to Australia, and because we came here, we have a better understanding of self and surrounding environment”. She explains that her political knowledge is much better because she can objectively observe what is happening to the minorities across the world. She gave the Rohingya crisis as an example in which she believes as a Buddhist herself, she was ashamed of the actions taken by the Myanmar Buddhist monks.

This self-critiquing aspect of the Chakmas was discussed in theme three (Table 5.1)

The table below is a summary of my discussion of existing literature and how my themes align with it.

Table 5.2 Summary of discussion aligning with the themes

	Theme 1: Upward mobility and security	Theme 2: Preserving culture in diaspora	Theme 3: Role of Advocacy
<b>Confirming previous research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of losing culture</li> <li>• Career advancement</li> <li>• Belonging/not belonging</li> <li>• Recognition, critiquing Bangladeshi government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness in preserving Language/culture</li> <li>• Fear of losing culture</li> <li>• Family and religious cohesion</li> <li>• Belonging/not belonging</li> <li>• Chakma and Indigeneity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging/not belonging</li> <li>• Recognition, critiquing Bangladeshi government</li> <li>• Chakma and Indigeneity</li> </ul>
<b>Contradicting previous research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Experiencing Racism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of Buddhism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing Racism</li> </ul>
<b>New findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's shifting roles and empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's shifting roles and empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readjustments in identity</li> <li>• Minority within a minority</li> </ul>

#### 5.3.3.4 Summary of Findings

In the previous sections, I summarised the three distinct findings that emerged from the analysis of the data and discussed them in relation to the existing literature. As Table 5.2 shows, these findings concern: culture preservation but at the same time the fear of losing it; the core relationship of their Chakma identity and Indigeneity, and therefore, the importance of recognition; having an empowered voice in Australia in critiquing the Bangladeshi government's failure to provide safety and security to its people and to protect their land, and the prevalent imbalance of power between the Bengalis and the Chakmas.

In the next section, I will answer my research question – *What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?* – employing the unified theoretical framework that I have combined and developed through the analysis of the data.

## 5.4 Theorising the Role of Education in Chakma Migration Stories

*"What ill-fated people are we to be born in Bangladesh!" – Gita*

In order to answer my research question – *What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story*, and to understand my findings in terms of broader theory, I combined three theories that had the greatest explanatory potential for the data findings. The role of education in the Chakma migration story can be problematised and understood through the lens of Quijano's (2000) concept of coloniality of power, Spivak's (1988) subaltern theory, and Kabeer's (1999) empowerment theory if we consider the themes and subthemes that have emerged from the data.

As expected of an inductive study, this section was written after I completed the analysis of my data from the two rounds of interviews and the focus group discussion. Of all the theorists that I have read, these three theorists and their positionings facilitated a more sensitive and nuanced understanding of the lives of the diasporic Chakma community in Melbourne. There was no single theory that served to answer my research question and my findings completely. Therefore, I incorporated three theories that provided a sound explanation for my findings: Quijano's coloniality of power (2000), particularly Quijano's four domains of power matrix regarding coloniality; Spivak's (1988) theory on subalternism; and Kabeer's (1999) theory of empowerment.

In the following three sections, I discuss how and which concepts from each theory I will be using in this study. If one looks at these three theories together, there is a way of integrating these into a useful and logical synthesis and an integrated framework that helps us not only understand the data but also identify the gaps and draw conclusions based on the data from this study. This unified theoretical lens becomes 'a system of concepts and a particular combination of theories that combine to provide a tool' (R. Chowdhury, 2019, p. 102) that answers the research question of this study. First, I explain these three theoretical concepts and, at the same time, more importantly, use the concepts as a critical theoretical lens to look into and better understand the meaning of the data.

#### 5.4.1 Coloniality of Power

Anibal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist and humanist thinker, introduced the key concepts of coloniality of power in the late 1980s. Since then, his research has focused on examining the coloniality of power and its implications in the formation of what he calls the modern world system. When he coined the terms coloniality of power, one might argue that Quijano did not really invent anything new; however, he came up with a fresh way of understanding the interconnectedness and networking in how the modern world system works (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014). His particular focus was on the colonial and imperial problems of the Global South, with consideration of Latin America.

Quijano's coloniality of power, which provides explanations of the hierarchical division of power, is very much applicable in Bangladesh and can help understand how the participants of this study have been affected by such structures of power and why they have carried the sense of powerlessness even

after immigration to a first-world country. In my study, therefore, I have found that Quijano's (2000) work on coloniality of power, especially the coloniality of economy and knowledge, is one of the most comprehensively developed arguments that can address issues of inequality, exploitation, racism, discrimination, and hierarchy since the British colonisation of the CHT region, during the Pakistani ruling period, but particularly over the past 50 years, since the birth of Bangladesh as a nation-state (Section 2.2).

However, it is important to clarify first the difference between coloniality and colonisation in order to avoid confusion in the use of the notion of coloniality as used in this dissertation. It is crucial to point out that coloniality in the contemporary world-system derives from the long history of European colonialism that preceded it (Grosfoguel, 2004). In basic terms, coloniality refers to the social, political, and cultural colonial paradigms that survive colonialism's end. Despite the death of colonialism (officially and politically), coloniality continues on living, configuring, and constituting local populations, systems, and geographies. In other words, colonialism's imprint remains. The word colonial in this sense does not refer to classical colonialism or the history of European colonisation of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; rather, it denotes internal colonialism and the systemic play of power that is manifested through persistent power structures embedded in society without overt external control. These forms of coloniality are exercised through institutions and dominant discourses and normative 'truths', which, in Bangladesh, almost everyone is learning, without really questioning what is truly happening to the Chakmas. In this study, I use the concept of coloniality to address the cultural, political, and economic oppression of subalternised (Spivak, 1988) Chakmas by dominant Bengalis and the nation-state, Bangladesh, and to understand how these agents of power manipulate social institutions to suppress minorities and deny them full access to their social benefits and rights.

When Quijano (2000, 2007) talks about the coloniality of power, he looks at social structures, rather than a colonial history, in terms of four mechanisms of control. Therefore, I am seeing coloniality as a positioning tool rather than a bygone historical era or process. Quijano describes the coloniality of power in four interrelated domains. In this study, I use these four domains interchangeably because the demarcation between these four forms of control is difficult to identify in my study context. For example, control of authority, knowledge, and subjectivity are rather difficult to differentiate as they are closely connected to each other. However, control of subjectivity and control of knowledge are the two important domains that I address in this study since the participants primarily refer to these two aspects. In the next section, I describe the four domains briefly.

First, coloniality of economy, according to Quijano (2000, 2007), includes land appropriation, exploitation, and control of natural resources. One of the key concerns in the CHT is the Bangladesh

government's inability to provide due recognition of the sui generis rights of the peoples living within its national border. Land grabbing in the CHT by Bengali settlers with the help of the military and control of natural resources (see Section 1.3.5) has continued, despite ongoing protests by the locals. Although we know that officially colonialism has ended, a new type of colonialism of a more insidious and pervasive nature in the form of economic colonisation has emerged (D. K. Sing, 2010). R. Joshi (2003) writes how the CHT economy was controlled by different regimes using its resources – whoever came into power exercised that power in many ways. First, 54,000 acres of arable land went underwater after the Kaptai Dam (turned into an artificial lake) construction, 100,000 people lost their homes, and a staggering 75 square kilometers of reserve forest areas went into the lake (R. Joshi, 2003). Since then, the structure of the economy in the region turned hugely in favour of the Bengalis as the lake benefitted the Bengali fishermen above all other local workers (Sawar, 1980).

However, economic control has been exercised in the strongest manner possible by bringing in the settlers, and with the connivance of the Bangladeshi administration, they have been able to take over land and even entire villages. In policy rhetoric and official discourses, the Bangladeshi government justifies the need for settlement in the CHT, because much of the land there is under-cultivated and, therefore, in their view, is wasted (Nepram, 2003). This argument takes little to no account of economic or political realities in the CHT, where in reality, 'only little land is suitable for farming and where the traditional owners are coerced into giving up their property' (Nepram, 2003, p. 154). K. Chakma and Hill (2013) write that, after the Pakistani colonisers, Bangladesh began 'active and systematic colonisation of the CHT, which was carried out by two means: introducing a policy of transmigration involving mass settlement of Bengalis and adopting a policy of state acquisition of the lands of people' (p. 137). Amnesty International Bangladesh (2000) reports ongoing demands for the restoration of traditional land rights, demilitarisation of the CHT region, and withdrawal and resettlement of the Bengali settlers in the plain land, particularly since the CHT Peace Accord, signed in 1997, has not seen any fruitful result.

The second and third domains in Quijano's (2000) matrix of power are control of authority, including institutions and army and control of gender, and sexuality, which he refers to as control of family and education. Broadly, these dimensions lie beyond the scope of this study. However, I understand that they might appear in some contexts in this study because of their connectedness and interrelatedness with the other domains.

The fourth and final domain is control of knowledge, which includes controlling epistemology, education, and the formation of subjectivity. Epistemological colonisation that amounts to colonisation of the mind is one of the key factors in exercising power. As Quijano (2007) writes,

Modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images, and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivized expression including intellectual and visual forms (p. 169).

Similarly, in this study, I see control of knowledge as a mechanism in which knowledge of ‘how things are’ is shaped by Bengali-dominated formal education through the curriculum; and control of subjectivity, which I understand as including how media, including social media, newspaper articles, and many other forms of media which shape or control how Chakmas are seen or perceived by the Bengalis. It is the Bengali government’s hegemonic tool (B. Chakma, 2018; Mohsin, 2010), ensuring that there are entire generations of Bengalis and even Chakmas who are growing up with a particular view of who Chakmas are, who minorities are, what they are called, and what their histories are. Chakmas are subalternised (Spivak, 1988) without a voice, without having control of the knowledge that the Bangladesh nation-state is creating through ongoing negative discourses. When these children grow up, they sustain this hegemonic view of the Chakmas (A. R. Chowdhury, 2016) as the *other*. These forms of controlling knowledge can be attributed to what Spivak (1988) calls epistemic violence, which is different from physical (or real) violence and is akin to symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2003) exerted through soft power, such as curriculum, policy, laws, and the constitution as mentioned above.

Quijano (2000) believes the coloniality of power is an expression to name the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism, which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present. He refers to the complex and multidimensional legacy of divisive, exploitative, and hierarchical forms of power (Eurocentric/Western-centric hegemony) and forms of knowledge. Coloniality thus means that the hegemony of colonial forms persists to this day as a legacy that structurally constitutes modernity, even in supposedly postcolonial times.

In this study, I found a strong theme addressed by all seven participants – of feeling powerless, having little to no control over life in the CHT despite it being their land. In understanding power structures embedded in the participants’ statements, Quijano’s (2000) concept of coloniality of power was a useful theoretical lens for this study. One of the persistent issues that arose in my analysis of the data, summarised in the section ‘Experiencing Racism’ (section 4.4.1.3) and highlighted in my discussion of Theme 3, is how participants described feeling powerless, exploited, and oppressed whenever they think about the future of the CHT, which is consistent with how Quijano (2000) explains the imbalanced power dynamic. This dynamic has been in play for as long as the participants remember, with the Bangladesh government, the military and the settlers – a combination of these three agents

of power – having control over the powerless Indigenous/Adivasi people. For example, Babu and Gita revealed that during their last visit to Rangamati and Khagrachhari, they were “heartbroken” to see the number of Bengali faces. Gita said, “I was actually terrified to see so many settlers in remote villages, where it was impossible to see any Bengalis in the past; it means they keep grabbing our lands and destroying our nature and our culture”. Similarly, Babu said,

*“It’s unfortunate I had to live in fear in my home because I was cautioned not to go out because I’m Australian, I felt very powerless, and many of my relatives talked about living in constant fear. . .we are nijer deshe porobashi foreigners in our own land”*

Quijano’s (1997) matrix of power, therefore, explains the sphere of ongoing control of authority over the Chakmas since the emergence of Bangladesh as a nation-state in 1971, which has become the new central authority of colonial domination. It also explains why the nation was conceived as mainly constituted of one ethnicity, articulated as Bengaliness. Therefore, Chakmas and the other minorities in the CHT are, arguably, not yet in a *postcolonial* state. Rather, the control over their affairs was merely passed from one colonial power, the British, to another colonial power, the Bengalis. This meant that the recognition of Bangladesh as a nation, through its Independence in 1971, was in fact a mere reconfiguration of the historical colonial era, which has morphed from its independent roots and legitimised the national constitution of Bangladesh and the rule of the dominant Bengalis, without due recognition of the sui generis rights of the peoples living within its national borders.

The overall findings of this study concur with Quijano’s (2000) matrix of power over the Chakmas and other minorities of Bangladesh, as data show that participants believe Bangladesh continues to be colonised by the majority Bengali Muslims, and therefore they understand the notion of postcoloniality in a very different way. For Bengalis, Bangladesh may have assumed the status of postcolonial in 1947; however, for the Chakmas, it meant only being colonised by the Pakistanis or rather by the Muslims, since both the East and West Pakistan divisions were based on a Muslim majority. For example, Juni said, “We are not *shadhin* independent in any way in Bangladesh. Our land is being grabbed by the settlers with the help of a very powerful army.” This could be interpreted as Juni’s desire to be independent, where the Chakmas and the other minorities would be in charge of their lives and their land. Mrinal, too reveals,

*“Shanti peace in the CHT depends on the army, it’s like we are their puppet, we can’t decide how we want to live in our own land. There’s a saying if a good army officer is posted, there’ll be peace, but if the officer is bad, then our life is in danger, a complete shit”.*

Quijano's (1997) notions of domain of control of authority and land appropriation align with the findings of this study. My participants' recurring utterances were very much related to the fact that colonisation is still occurring and is not merely a historical event and that their voices are subalternised through the colonial machinery. Feeling powerless becomes very personal to Nanadhon while describing the impact of the military dominance in the region,

*"The Bangladesh army destroyed my kaka's (uncle) life along with many other relatives. If you ask any Jummas, you'll hear very similar stories, and we have lost count of how many people have died in the hands of the army in the CHT. But the so-called media in the country has remained so blind and so silent that it is deafening when it comes to CHT".*

This powerful statement of the media turning a blind eye towards the communities in the CHT, then, is evidence of Quijano's fourth domain of control of knowledge and subjectivity, providing clear evidence that the colonial mentality still lingers very strongly in the participants' minds even after living outside Bangladesh for more than two decades (in Nanadhon's case). In Bangladesh, most to all forms of media (social media, television, and newspapers) are controlled, owned, and published by the Bengalis; they decide what to publish and what not. Other aspects are also involved; if a journalist reports a reality of any sort, such as a truth that the government does not want to be reported, the journalist might be imprisoned with extrajudicial murders being common occurrences. Devi was particularly vocal around this issue:

*"Reporters, I mean even Bengali journalists and reporters have to use fake names, and Jummas have to open fake IDs on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram so that their real identity cannot be identified, so in a country, where even Bengalis cannot oppose the government or the powerful local people, we don't stand a chance".*

Devi gives multiple examples of accounts that she follows on all the above-mentioned media resources without knowing the real person, such as The Silenced Voices of CHT - a Twitter account that reports "the atrocities of the army with proof, with pictures, with documents", which Devi says, which has been an important source for her to stay up-to-date with recent happenings. She argues that just because these are the types of "important news [that] government consider very sensitive, doesn't mean they're not happening; we cannot trust most Bangladeshi newspaper, TV channels because they don't show the real news". The views above show participants' strong belief that subjectivity and knowledge are strictly controlled by the nation-state and there is great ongoing mistrust between the Bengalis and the Indigenous minorities.



Some voices, on the other hand, are privileged, and there are systems in place that institutionalise, codify and eventually legitimatise these privileged voices as the norm. An example is the education system, which in the Subcontinent, was established by the British, where Thomas Macaulay (1835) in his civilising mission wrote 'Indians should be educated more in English so as to create a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in moral and in intellect' (n.p.). In the case of the Chakmas, since independence in 1971, the Bangladeshi government has circulated negative discourses in education and culture about Chakma people that have certainly had a profound impact on how the majority Bengalis see them. However, subjugation goes beyond 1971 without a doubt through many oppressive voices - the Muslim voice, then the Bengali voice and before that the British voice that subalternised the voices including that of the Chakmas.

The findings of this study are congruent with Quijano's (2000) matrix of power in coloniality, primarily focussing on the control of economy and authority through the excessive presence of the military in the CHT region, and the control of subjectivity and knowledge through policy, law, textbook, and media. In addition, the findings of this study can also extend Quijano's (2000) four domains to a fifth one. Two of the critical aspects for the participants of this study were first to stop the politics of nomenclature, as Nanadhon argued,

*"Let us decide what we want to call ourselves or how we want to be represented, we want to be called Chakma jati, Tripura jati, Marma jati and so on; we want to stop these khudro nrigoshthi, khudro jatishotta . . . I mean, really, why aren't we included in these name deciding, and why do we even have to demand our names? This is ridiculous in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".*

Second, participants demand their due recognition as Indigenous/Adivasi, not only to escape economic, social, and culturally marginalised positions, but so that the future generations in the CHT and in diaspora grow up with a strong Chakma identity. For example, Devi opined that Adivasis are becoming increasingly marginalised because,

*"We follow different cultures, speak so many languages and traditions [that differ] from mainstream Bengali society, and we must protect these and pass on the values and traditions to our children, grandchildren, but the way Bangladesh is going on, it's not going to happen, we need international support".*

These two critical findings from the data can be described as enduring control of identity - this involves not only the initial control of the original environment of the CHT but also the intergenerational transfer of cultural values through state-control of curriculum, media representation, and negative

discourses. This critical finding is not addressed in Quijano's (2000) matrix of four domains of coloniality of power.

However, Quijano's (2000) matrix of power does not take into consideration particular contexts of how the Chakmas in Melbourne have changed their subaltern position using education. Here, Spivak's (1988) theory of Subalternism is helpful in understanding the Chakma people's experiences of movement and settlement from the CHT to Melbourne.

#### 5.4.2 Voicelessness and the Subaltern

Spivak (1988), a second-generation postcolonial researcher, who, somewhat ironically for this study, happens to be Bengali, published a landmark article that condensed the very question with respect to minority lack of voice in a concise title: *Can the subaltern speak?* She used the word subaltern from what Gramsci (1978) called the subaltern class.

Spivak (1988), in her subaltern theory, refers to the subaltern as a group of people who are not represented within the coloniser-colonised binary because they are the third group and have no voice – they can speak, but they have no channel to be heard. She argues that the subaltern groups without power do not have a voice because the state machineries are structured in a way that powerless people are not permitted or supported to speak, and when they do, they are not understood or acknowledged. Therefore, Spivak concludes that 'the subaltern cannot speak' (p. 308).

My findings do not support this assertion. Instead, my participants showed that it is not that subalterns, or in this case, the Chakmas, cannot speak; rather it is the political and state machineries that are refusing to hear their voices. For example, Mrinal strongly believes that Bangladesh has "never treated the people properly from the very beginning, we are like second class citizens". He gives the example of how Mujibur Rahman, the first prime minister of Bangladesh, right after Bangladesh became independent, asked all the minorities to upgrade their status by becoming Bengalis (Section 1.3). Participants criticise how in the last almost 50 years, "people in power ignored listening to us, our demands" (Juni). What Juni says here is shared by all other six participants that there has always been a gap between the sender and the receiver; the people in power only hear what they want to hear, which concurs with Spivak's (1988) belief that the subaltern does not speak in a 'vocabulary' (p. 285) that will get a hearing in institutional locations of power.

The findings in this study both support and contradict some of the concepts of Spivak's (1988) theory of voicelessness and subalternism. In this study, education works as a capacitor, which has desubalternised the Chakmas in Melbourne in many ways. This has been felt in a clearer and more conspicuous way outside Bangladesh among the diasporic communities, particularly in Australia, because of its skilled immigration system (Section 2.5.2). Unlike the diverse immigration programs of

the US, Chakmas immigrated to Australia solely based on education – without any exception, everyone has to come using educational qualifications that include certain scores on an English proficiency tests (such as the IELTS). My analysis shows that the sense of powerlessness and subalternation of the Chakma changes in Melbourne, which has been possible primarily because of their educational achievements.

Spivak (1988) argues that a number of factors prevent subaltern people from being heard rather than from being able to speak. She argues that the most powerful people in the society, for example, academics, religious leaders, or those privileged in the society, always speak *for* or *on behalf of* the subalterns, robbing the subalterns of their own voice, and even well-meaning intellectuals and other elites only reinforce current power structures. Thus, Spivak concludes that the subaltern cannot speak because they are always spoken for. She wishes for these people to have an effective political voice.

Chakmas have also been subalternised by creating history and memories that have been written and spoken for them, another key factor in Spivak's (1988) theory. The prominent belief in the existing literature shows that the Chakmas are still seen as exotic, primitive, ethnocentric, and so forth. (B. Chakma, 2018). Binu, Devi, and Mrinal give examples of how "many Bengalis think we eat pork, *shap* snakes, *baeng* frogs, raw food and therefore, [are] kind of uncivilised" and often these are the first questions they all encountered after being introduced to people. Mrinal also says, "We get judged because they consider eating pork is extremely dirty and they are not used to eating anything uncooked". Devi calls most Bengalis racist, uneducated and ignorant because they only believe what they read in the newspapers or media and her strong opinion is that "to keep the division alive, they included us very differently in school books, show us in a way I suppose, to justify we're not allowed to be upgraded as Jati" – a very powerful analysis of the negative historical discourses created over many decades that shows subalterns indeed are spoken *for* (Spivak, 1988).

Along with epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988), which I have discussed above, other instances of *real* violence towards the subalterns is evident in the inhabitants of the CHT region, particularly if we take into consideration the many violent massacres and killings that have never stopped (K. Chakma & Hill, 2013). These have been extensively reported in previous studies. Of these, the most significant acts of violence are the two planned atrocities in the name of development in the CHT region: one was the Kaptai Dam construction, which had a tremendous effect on the Chakma (see Section 1.3) and which uprooted 50% of the Chakma population from their own land and created the diaspora of Chakma refugees in India. From the Pakistani government's standpoint, the Dam was to develop the region and civilise the Hill People by creating an artificial lake that would also generate electricity for the rest of the country – the result of which continues to have repercussions today.

The second planned atrocity – this time by the Bangladesh government – was bringing into the CHT the poverty-stricken settlers, promising them land. This had the planned motive of systematically destroying and eliminating the people. One could argue that this re-enacted the oppressive treatment towards people the Chakma had already experienced by the British and Pakistan. Consequently, the CHT people remain voiceless and subaltern. These types of real violence indeed come from the privileged and dominant positions of power that consequently dominate the people and their institutional structures – family, religion, economies, law, governance, and so on at the epistemic level (Quijano, 2000, 2007).

Despite ongoing demands to be recognised as Indigenous/Adivasi, to be able to determine what they want to be called, the Chakma have been subalternised (Section 2.2.3) because they are not being heard. In other words, the huge gap between the sender and receiver (Byrd & Rothberg, 2011) inflicted by power has influenced severely how the history of the subaltern has been written and how the subaltern subjects in the CHT have been absent, silenced, how facts have been distorted, and how non-recognition of the Chakma's status has endured.

With the strong presence of the military in the CHT, the growing number of settlers, and the correspondingly declining number of the Chakmas (mainly due to fleeing to India) through surveillance, staying optimistic for Babu is becoming increasingly difficult. He says, "In 30-50 years, there might not be many Chakmas left in the CHT because the government will not stop bringing in settlers to our lands". He remains sceptical that Chakmas or the other minorities will prevail in the CHT. Nanadhon, on the other hand, is hopeful that future generations will make the government hear them. His views resonate with Newland's (2010) argument that this 'hear' part can open up the possibility of having dialogues between the oppressed and the oppressor.

While Spivak's analysis provides a very important critical lens to understand the experiences of oppression for Chakma in Bangladesh, her critical view is not representative of the experiences of Chakmas in the diaspora. Participants in this study, in fact, desubalternise some of these forces by developing advocating voices through transnational advocacy that the Chakmas should be recognised as Indigenous and as Gita says should be treated like,

*"Real people and real citizens just like the Bengalis are treated, without questioning our loyalty to the country, without needing to prove that we actually are a part of Bangladesh. Still now whenever I hear Bangladeshi national anthem, I become emotional, isn't that a proof that I'm forever connected to the country I was born in?"*

In an interview, Spivak clearly states that it is the educated people's duty to work for the subaltern against subalternity, by which she means that it is not enough just to let subalterns speak from their subaltern position, rather others (educated, scholars, privileged) need to work and rethink structures of power in order to end the exclusion of certain members in the society, which creates the subaltern in the first place.

However, my findings do not support Spivak's notion that it is the educated people's (educated, scholars, privileged) duty to work *for* the subaltern, *against* subalternity, and that it is not enough *just* to let the subalterns speak from their subaltern position. To suggest so, in my opinion, would be patronising. The participants in this study can and do speak for themselves; they become *the* voice, representing their own people by voicing out against the discriminatory practices for the betterment of the people in the CHT and the Indigenous/Adivasi people. Even once Chakmas settle in Australia, they continue using education; they take up advocacy roles, they can sustain and maintain their communal practices and intergenerationally transfer the Chakma values and customs – all facilitated by education. The education that subalternised Chakma in Bangladesh assumes the new role of desubalternisation in diaspora. Paradoxically, education can also empower, give voice and desubalternise the subaltern voices. As Smith (1999) says, 'looking through the eyes of the colonised, cautionary tales are told from a perspective, tales designed not just to voice the voiceless but to prevent the dying – of people, of culture, of ecosystem' (p. 3).

Both Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power matrix and Spivak's (1988) subaltern theory do not fully address how these Chakmas have exercised education as a capacity, which has desubalternised them, given them their voice back, consequently empowering them to take a role of advocacy for the people back home, to raise awareness of the several ongoing forms of oppression of the CHT people. Therefore, Kabeer's (1999) theory of empowerment through agency is a helpful critical lens to examine the role of education in the Chakma's life in Melbourne.

#### 5.4.3 Empowerment through Agency

This section does not try to exhaustively visit the substantial literature on empowerment but to pinpoint the most relevant takes on this concept for the object of this study – the situation of minorities, on one hand, and the possibility to conceive empowerment in relation to education used as a resource towards empowerment. The relationship between empowerment and agency is discussed along with the conditions for making the shift from a disempowered to an empowered condition for a subaltern group of Chakma, specifically focusing on Kabeer's (1999) empowerment theory through agency.

Naila Kabeer, an Indian-born British Bangladeshi social economist has been working and researching primarily in South and South Asia on poverty, gender, social exclusion, labour markets, livelihoods, and the social protection of women. Kabeer has been active in developing frameworks and methodologies for integrating gender concerns into policy and planning, and has published extensively on gender hierarchies. Kabeer's empowerment theory (1999) supports how the Chakmas become empowered through education and how they achieve a voice in a third country (see Sections 4.3.6 and 5.3). Kabeer (1999) talks about empowerment through agency, which can be achieved by making *strategic* choices. Although Kabeer's empowerment theory is about women who are disadvantaged in societies, focusing predominantly on developing countries, the theory nevertheless can be applied to people that are oppressed, discriminated against, and subjugated - just like the Chakma in/from the CHT. Kabeer talks about a very particular type of empowerment that is achieved through agency by using resources. In my study, her theory is relevant because my participants are using their resources and affordances, in this case, education and moving to Australia as skilled immigrants for a better and a secure life.

The notions of empowerment, agency, and choice are central to an understanding of how empowerment can be achieved, sustained, and enhanced. By expanding the concepts of choice and agency, we are also able to expand the concept of empowerment. In line with Kabeer (1988), Eyban and Napier-Moore's (2009) idea of empowerment is that 'today most frequently, empowerment is about choice, decision making, realising opportunities and potential, and community action' (p. 291). This expansion of the notion of choice refers also to gender relations and empowerment as a choice expansion without referring to gender relations and thinking of empowerment as an expanded form of agency and choice. Dryduk, (2013) argues that empowerment is a result (or outcome) that presupposes a process of change to produce it and evidently, 'refers not simply to a state of affairs but to a process of change with a specific kind of outcome' (p. 251).

Agency in this study is seen as acting successfully toward the goal of the Chakma immigrants to achieve security, freedom, and a better life (that they did not have in Bangladesh) in a third country by becoming Australian citizens. Amartya Sen (1995), another Bengali economist, and Nobel Prize winner stresses on the need for people to have an active role in pursuing whatever goals they have reasons to pursue and promote. Sen's work promotes agency as an individual's own choice: while some people are able or manage to exercise their agency to a greater degree than others do, others cannot, primarily due to their circumstances or their limited resources. In addition, for those who cannot, Alkire (2008) believes it is impossible for them to employ self-determination to choose and appropriate actions, given that such actions are chosen under coercion or social pressure rather than an exercise of free will and choice.

For Sen (1999), one of the most influential intellectuals regarding empowerment for the disadvantaged, empowerment refers to the expansion of agency (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007), indicating the scope for action an agent has in pursuing goals s/he has designed in accordance with his/her values (Sen, 1999). This involves not only the process of agency but also opportunities for freedom. Sen (2001) sees capabilities as a person's opportunity, ability, and freedom to generate valuable outcomes, with an emphasis on practical choices, 'to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value' (p. 291).

Ibrahim and Akire (2007) use Sen's definition of empowerment as an expansion of agency and Rowland's (1986) taxonomy of four types of power to propose four corresponding categories for the exercise of agency whose expansion can be read as empowerment. These are empowerment as control (power over), empowerment as choice (power to), empowerment in community (power with), and empowerment as change (power from within). Sen's approach on empowerment is one among numerous which conceptualise empowerment differently. Drydyk (2008) takes a similar stand on empowerment, in which an expansion of agency is seen as a process of change and attaining results. However, *choice effectiveness* for Drydyk is part of empowerment rather than the actual agency.

Kabeer (1999) took up the concepts of Sen and modified and conceptualised Sen's five factors of empowerment into three facets: agency, resources (Kabeer breaks down Sen's capabilities into resources and agency), and achievement. I use Kabeer's sense of empowerment which is the process of agency of those people who have been denied 'the ability to make choices' (p. 13). Kabeer (1999) writes,

The notion of empowerment is that it is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful, but they are not empowered in the sense in which I am using the word because they were never disempowered in the first place (p. 437).

Kabeer also argues that not all choices are equally important or relevant to the definition of power, and therefore, people strategically make choices, such as where to live, whom to marry, when to have children, and so forth. Hence, Kabeer emphasises empowerment as the expansion in people's ability to make *strategic* life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. In order to exercise these strategic choices, Kabeer offers three interrelated dimensions: resources (pre-conditions), agency (process), and achievements (outcomes).

Chakmas' 'choice/s' stem from their subordinate, subaltern status in Bangladesh, the power relations that they have experienced all their life, reminding us that power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice but also through the *kinds* of choices they have made. Despite having ongoing, prestigious, and tenured jobs with higher wages, these Chakma immigrants left the country and their people. Their resources do not come from any materialistic values, or outlook, which is different from Kabeer's resources, as Kabeer's resources indicate material resources and 'other human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice' (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). For the Chakmas, then, it is their education and their degrees both from Bangladesh and from Australia that they apply as resources in order to exercise their agency – the process to have a safer and more secure life with freedom, not having to worry about children's future, or in many cases about their own life because of the ongoing political turmoil in the CHT. Educational achievements have given them the scope for action, or the freedom of choice, which gives them a sense of empowerment, indicating the process by which their ultimate goal of becoming Australians becomes successful and ultimately giving them a voice (Spivak, 1988) to critique the Bangladesh government and its treatment towards the minorities.

Therefore, the agency for the Chakmas is the *action*, and the *choices* they have made to *alter* their subaltern position (Spivak, 1988) in a third country. Their ability to define a particular goal of becoming Australian citizens, and hence to hold an Australian passport that would give them a much stronger sense of security (by becoming citizens of a first-world country), all contribute to a sense of *power from within*. Kabeer also believes that agency has both positive and negative meanings in relation to power. The first implies the *power to* as people's capacity to define their own life choices and pursue their goals, even in the face of others' oppositions (in this case, they leave the CHT for security and freedom). The second, *power over*, is the capacity of a person/actor/category to override (a positive agency) the agency of others to subjugate them (a negative agency), such as through violence, coercion, and threat (the CHT political situation and ongoing conflicts).

There is no denying that empowerment has to come from within, whether it is about one person or a group of people, or a community. One needs to be motivated, driven to act upon their agency to achieve their goals; as Kabeer (1999) writes, 'empowerment is rooted in how people see themselves – their sense of self-worth' (p. 15). Education appeared to increase these Chakmas' self-worth, so they understood that they deserved better. AusAID scholarships had exposed them to an egalitarian, multicultural society where they would be able to live a much better life, and upon realising that they exercised their best resources of educational achievements in order to achieve their goals through their agency.



My findings support and extend the third and final theoretical lens I used in this study - Kabeer's (1999) theorisation of empowerment. Although Kabeer uses her empowerment theory for women, I found certain concepts of her theory were equally transferable to the Chakmas, as an oppressed Indigenous minority, and how they have become empowered through education. I found it particularly transferable because Kabeer emphasises the importance of education in making women empowered, women who are oppressed and discriminated against compared to the men in almost all patriarchal societies and systems. Similarly, Chakmas too are socially disadvantaged, oppressed, discriminated against, and only through education have they become empowered to some extent. Kabeer (1999) conceptualises empowerment through three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources, and achievement. Agency represents the process by which choices are made and put into effect – the central concept of empowerment. Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised, while achievements refer to the outcomes of agency.

According to Kabeer (1999), agency has both positive and negative connotations; the *power to* refers to people's ability to make strategic life choices, even in the face of others' opposition, and the *power over* refers to the capacity of some actors to override the agency of others through the exercise of authority. Agency, in relation to empowerment, therefore, 'implies not only actively exercising choices but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations' (p. 445) and 'what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important' (Sen, 1985, p. 203). Participants in this study, by making strategic choices, such as applying for AusAID scholarships using their most valuable resource – their educational achievements in Bangladesh – have been able to immigrate to Australia. This process helped them to frame *other* choices, for instance, where to live, freedom of movement, taking actions to upgrade their educational qualifications to better equip themselves with better job prospects. These decisions ultimately gave them the capacity to exercise agency because of the participants' experience with inequality and injustice; their status in the society helped them become empowered with *power from within* to advocate their agency by using the resources that were not always available to them in Bangladesh.

Therefore, my findings support Kabeer's (1999) notion of agency, the 'ability to define one's goals and act upon them; challenge power relations' (p. 438). An example of this power from within appears to be how all seven participants use social media fearlessly (because they are not in Bangladesh) to raise global awareness, challenging and criticising the Bangladesh government's decision in rehabilitating displaced Rohingya minority from Myanmar,

*"While we sympathise with the Rohingyas because we can understand their sufferings, they are a big threat for us, they have already outnumbered us. The government gave them shelter*

*because they're Muslims and because the international media is paying attention to this crisis. But we don't get attention, despite the same killings, continuous attacks that is happening within the country. So, it's our responsibility to let the world know about us"- (Mrinal)*

*"When will Bengalis apologise for the genocide, ethnic cleansing, land grab, and persecution committed against Jumma peoples . . . ethnic cleansing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts still continues"- (Devi)*

However, Kabeer's (1999) Empowerment theory does not take into consideration how, *after* becoming empowered, the Chakmas have taken a stand for advocacy for their people they have left behind – to give back, to advocate for Indigenous recognition, and rights, to raise global awareness. This advocacy role can be seen as an extension to Kabeer's Empowerment theory, in that even after achieving their agency (finding a better and a secure life and becoming Australian citizens), these Chakmas do not stop, and they take the further step of advocacy. Participants use multiple resources for advocacy as part of their empowered voices; they take advantage of the ubiquitous and proliferating existence of social media, believing that social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, have been extremely helpful in raising global awareness. Communication on Facebook has enabled diasporic Chakmas to share CHT-related news, ideas, and images. Facebook as a virtual platform is not only used as individual accounts; collective sites of organisations, associations, and groups have been created where diasporic Chakmas come together to exchange information and opinions in these digital spaces. Most participants believe it is a good way of reaching larger audiences to raise awareness of the CHT issues; as Nanadhon said, "we have to take advantage of technology because this is one of the most influential ways of reaching a bigger audience, the more people know about us, the sooner we are going to get results".

Next, I found that Chakmas in Australia keep regular contact with the Chakma Chief, Raja Devasish Roy, and seek his advice on how to become globally more engaged with the communities and human rights organisations. Participants work collaboratively to raise awareness and gain support (Section 5.4.3) within Australia and international support with human rights organisations, and they build relationships through networking, accessing resources to educate themselves by reading and learning about other people across the world. At the same time, they advocate by educating others, as Juni said, "every opportunity I get to let others know the Chakmas situation in Bangladesh, I use it". With the widespread availability of the Internet, information, and communications technology, as mentioned above, the abundance of resources has helped them to make it possible to work together towards a collective empowered voice with other Chakmas. Not only for Chakmas but for the

communities collectively, such as decreasing the gap between Chakmas and other communities as discussed in Chapter 4.

In this study, empowerment is used concerning the voice construct and refers to the process, which enhances an individual's or groups' capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005). For example, Devi said,

*"We are the ones need to voice out, forcing almost, the international community to wake up and listen to our concerns and the atrocity, human rights violations that have been happening for so long. We must highlight the issues of the ongoing political power abuse in the CHT because we have the opportunity now, now that we live in a first-world country. We must do something for our people back home".*

Educational achievements have given my participants the resources and the means (the agency) to voice out from a third country to advocate rights for the Chakma. They are standing up for their rights and challenge the social values, doctrines, and ideologies that have served latently to keep the Chakmas in their disempowered condition through exertion of epistemic violence. If successful in their endeavour, they will be able to change the 'terms of recognition' (Appadurai, 2004) and have a solid basis for the new position they have earned for themselves in society. They become empowered enough to not just resist opposing powers but to advocate and criticise the Bangladesh government and the Bengalis for their oppressive colonial attitudes towards the people. The Chakmas in Melbourne disperse their voices spatiotemporally by using their voices to work with other diasporic Chakmas and with other communities in other countries to raise awareness of the discriminatory situation of the Chakma/Indigenous/Adivasi/Jummas in the CHT (space) and also to maintain their heritage culture, language and identity intergenerationally (over time) as can be seen in Figure 5.2.

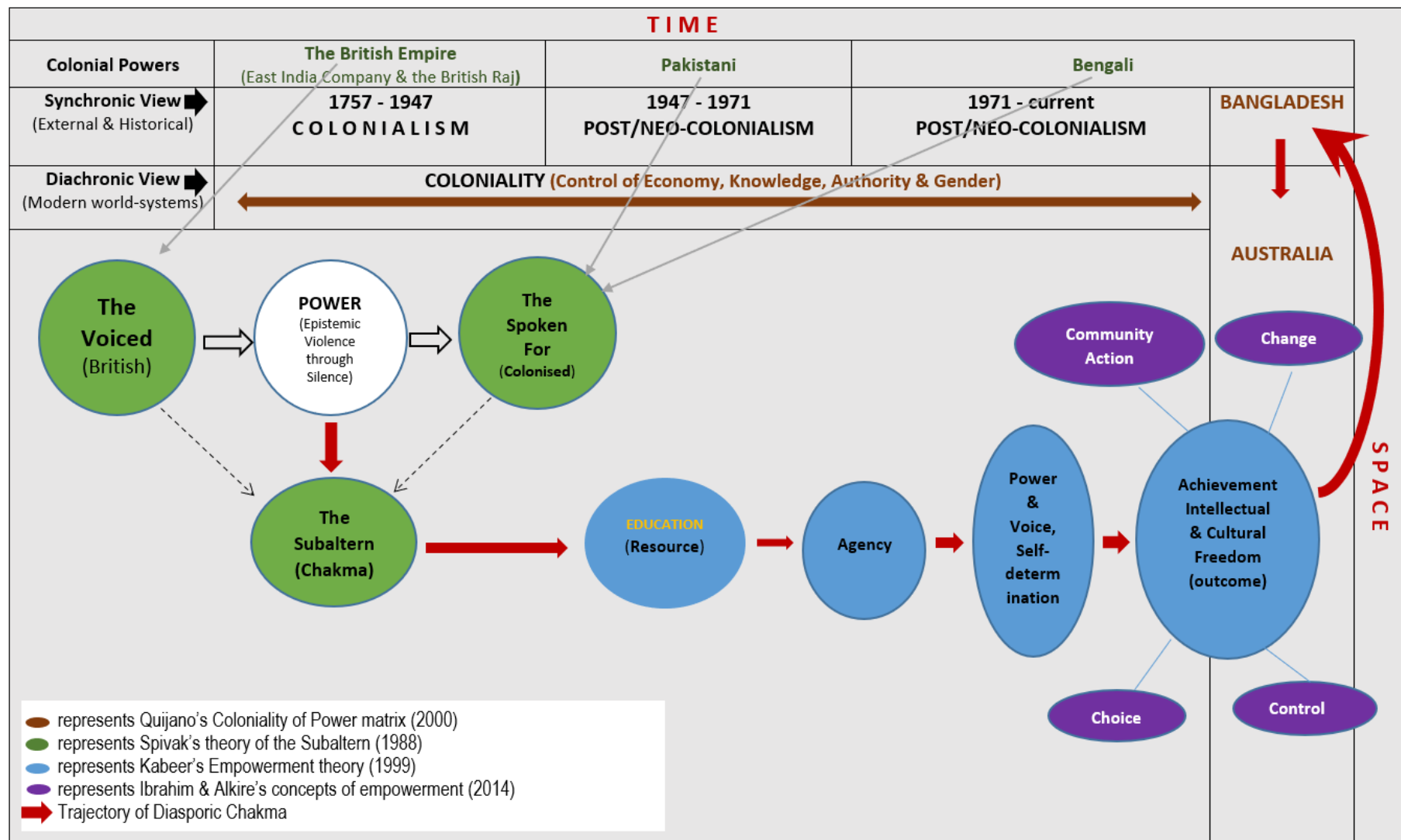


Figure 5.2 Theoretical Framework – a synthesis of major theories

Figure 5.2 above synthesises and consolidates the most important theories that inform this study and is composed of three interconnected components. The horizontal row at the top represents temporal progression (time), while the vertical column on the right represents spatial movement (space). These are the two simultaneous trajectories of the Chakmas that are considered in this study. In the horizontal plane, two distinct ways of understanding the notion of colonialism are presented. The first is in the synchronic historical sense, which is overt and external and works through the subjugation of people through political structures and administration. The second is the notion of coloniality (Quijano, 2000), which is a continuum and is ahistorical. For the Chakma, it is this ongoing coloniality that has been consistent, despite the major political shifts in the Subcontinent. The European and British colonisers were those in power until the Second World War, and when the British left and the Subcontinent gained independence, the Pakistanis took over (1947 and 1971). After the Independence War of 1971, Bengalis took over from the Pakistanis. Over these successive periods of power play, the Chakmas were never in positions of power; therefore, to use to colonialism in the historical sense, to treat it as a past and concluded event, is reductive. However, the notion of *the Coloniality of Power* (Quijano, 2000) allows a better understanding of the varying conditions of subjugation of the Chakma people through internal and inherent control of social structures and economy, knowledge and subjectivity.

The second interrelated component in this figure is informed by Spivak's (1988) notions of voices and voicelessness based on her *Subaltern Theory*, also discussed above. Three groups are shown here, in the historical colonial context of India; the first two are the British who have the voice, the colonised Bengalis who are spoken *for*. The third group is the Subaltern, who were neither voiced, nor spoken for; such as the peasants, workers, the transgender, and ethnic minorities, such as the Chakma. The exertion of power between the first two groups (oppressor/oppressed) is represented through unidirectional arrows. Again, just as in the colonialism/coloniality row above, Chakmas are not present here; they are in a third space of the Subaltern. Hence the dots (in place of arrows) represent disconnectedness, and power is exerted upon them through a mechanism far stronger than laws and state machineries (such as formal education) through epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988).

The third component of this figure is based on Kabeer's (1999) *Empowerment Theory*, which affords an understanding of the trajectory of the Chakmas after immigrating to Australia (through an investment in their educational achievements). It is in this third phase where the Chakmas are finally able to *de*-subalternise their positions, to reappropriate their voices, and to become empowered.

Finally, the prominent red arrow between the second and the third parts (and aligned with the first) represents their trajectory of change across both space and time. While these Chakmas move across

space (from the British colonial period to current postcolonial Bangladesh), they also move from the CHT to Dhaka and from Bangladesh to Australia, and ultimately they convey their values to the next generation. The final red arrow on the right side represents the advocacy role the Chakmas have taken in Melbourne after achieving their ultimate goal of becoming Australian citizens. They are determined to give back to the communities they have left behind – advocating and working towards Indigenous recognition, promoting education and for overall betterment of the CHT and its inhabitants.

## 5.5 Conclusion

There was no single theory that served to answer my research question completely. Therefore, I have used Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power that proposes four domains of power, as they appear relevant to my study. However, Quijano's concepts do not take into consideration the voicelessness and powerlessness of subalterns. Here Spivak's (1988) theory of subalterns was useful in understanding the specific context and the conditions of the diasporic Chakmas. Although participants talk about not having power and not being heard in Bangladesh, they become empowered and raise their voices to advocate from the space of a third country. However, none of these two theorists address empowerment in their theories, which is why Kabeer's (1999) concept of empowerment through education became relevant. Together these three theories synthesise into a unified theoretical framework, which sheds critical light on the phenomena for this study.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

*No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental.*

Edward Said

## 6.1 Introduction

In his celebrated collection of essays *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993) explains that:

All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation... for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place.

As I draw this thesis to its close, I look back and realise how cathartic the experiencing of writing it has been for me. While trying to understand the lived experiences of the seven participants of this study, I immersed myself into my own; and the deeper I delved into their lifeworlds, the more I understood mine. Said's notion of the constructed nature of history reminds me once again of the epigraph from T.S. Eliot in Chapter 2 - that history, written by the powerful, has its own agenda of contrived intentions. In committing to conducting this research, I was therefore burdened with a double task: to fairly represent the experiences of the diasporic Chakma people in Melbourne, but also to crystallise my life-long experiences of being a Chakma in the CHT, in Dhaka and eventually in Melbourne without being taken over by any overt emotional agenda. I keep in mind Said's caution in his biography *Out of Place*: 'much as I have no wish to hurt anyone's feelings, my first obligation has not been to be nice but to be true to my perhaps peculiar memories, experiences, and feelings.' (1999, p. 217-8).

This thesis then becomes an intellectual exercise in which I situate the study's findings within frameworks of understanding from previous studies. In doing so, I subscribe to my ontological commitment to pave the way a little further in our scholarship on the lives of diasporic minorities in the world.

This study committed to exploring the lived experiences of a group of Chakma immigrants and their journey from the CHT to Dhaka and finally to Melbourne, Australia, explicitly focusing on the research question 'What is the role of education in the Chakma migration story?'. To that end, I collected qualitative data from two rounds of interviews and a focus group discussion as well as from several

platforms of social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Importantly, I also interviewed the Chakma Chief Raja Devasish Roy as part of my initial data collection to frame questions for the individual interviews that followed. Although it is not customary to get permission from the Chakma Chief, I desired to inform him that I was going to conduct a study on the diasporic Chakmas in Melbourne in a way of both asking for permission and seeking his blessings.

In this closing chapter, I first revisit the main findings which were reported in the previous two chapters; I then discuss the implications of the findings, followed by limitations of this study, and the need for further research in the area in the suggestions for further studies.

## 6.2 Revisiting the Main Findings

In order to understand the role of education in the Chakma migration story, three major findings were discussed in the previous chapter, presenting a composite picture of the following:

- 1) The Chakma utilise their educational achievements in achieving a better and more secure life for themselves and for their future generations by gaining upward social mobility.
- 2) The Chakma show greater awareness of and commitment to culture preservation in diaspora. They purposefully practise certain cultural aspects at home within the family and as a community in the hope that the future generations of diasporic Chakmas will value their own cultural background.
- 3) The Chakma critique the Bangladeshi government's inability and unwillingness to give the Chakma people their due Indigenous/Adivasi recognition. While they work with other diasporic Chakma/Jummas to raise global awareness, they also tend to critique their *own* privileged educational status compared to other minority communities and how they tend to take advantage of that position.

Together these findings suggest that the dynamic, shifting, and idiosyncratic positions of the Chakmas are dictated not just by historical discourses of subjugation and the dominant discourses of powerful groups but also by their own intellectual, philosophical and moral metamorphosis over time. Indeed, the participants of this study were keenly aware of and vocal about their growth as individual, social and cultural beings and attributed such growth to factors beyond the immediate realm of politics and economics. It can be said that the more educational affordances these participants had access to, the more critical they became, not just in terms of understanding the macro forces at work but also in realising how power and control are exerted not unidirectionally but from multiple points both centrifugally and centripetally. This also gave them a better sense of agency and how to exercise their agency in extending their ethical responsibilities, including the need for advocacy across countries and generations.



### 6.3 Implications and Contributions of the Study

This study has shown that the attainment of education facilitates the socially disadvantaged and politically discriminated and subjugated minorities in mobilising their positions into a more empowered space. Kabeer's (1999) notion of education's ability to provide voices to the oppressed subaltern (Spivak, 1988) is evident in the ways in which the participants of this study reported they attained greater visibility while in Melbourne. With this, Quijano's (2000) notion of the colonality of power revealed how *even* after living in a first-world country for many years, past experiences of their lives in the CHT are perennially embedded in their identities.

The previous two chapters detailed the findings of this study. As expected of an inductive study, while the study engaged with theories from previous studies and was informed – both theoretically and methodologically – by empirical findings from previous studies, it also generated a *new* unified theoretical framework (Figure 5.2), which extends previous research. This theoretical lens provides a more holistic analytical tool to inform future studies into the lives of diasporic minority communities.

A major contribution of this thesis lies in its attempts to study the Chakma's lived experiences of their spatiotemporal journey from the CHT to Dhaka and finally to Melbourne, Australia using this theoretical lens. To my knowledge, this is the first study on the Chakmas in Australia. No studies on the educational achievements of the Chakmas have been approached from the perspective of the present study.

### 6.4 Limitations of the Study

As an inductive study, this research is characterised by the evolving nature of its theoretical and methodological choices. Despite this, some limitations are inevitable. While some of these are methodological, others originate from the scope of the study in terms of its inclusion and exclusion, as well as those that are a result of unexpected or unanticipated scenarios. I acknowledge that some of these limitations are likely to affect the external and internal validity of the study. These include the characteristic limitations of purposive (rather than random) sampling and snowballing techniques, the limited number of participants, and the short time period of the study.

First, this research was conducted with a small number of seven participants – the first-generation Chakma migrants who have been living in Melbourne for relatively short times. The study aimed to achieve a rich description of the experiences of the Chakma - in the CHT, in Bangladesh, and in Australia. However, the study design would limit the generalisability of the findings because of the length of their residence in Melbourne. Also, using the snowballing technique in recruiting the participants may have only provided a small cross-section of the Chakma society in Melbourne. Therefore, studies with a larger and more diverse number of participants recruited through random

sampling in the future will provide more a more complex study that is likely to facilitate more diverse findings.

Secondly, the study was conducted within a short time frame; a longitudinal study involving both adults (such as in this study) and younger Chakma who were born and brought up in Australia would afford better insights into themes such as culture retention and intergenerational transfer of cultural and linguistic traditions.

Finally, this study was conducted only with participants from Melbourne, and six out of the seven participants first came to Australia on Australian government (AusAID) scholarships. It is possible that they might have felt – consciously or subconsciously – a sense of gratitude towards Australia and its government in making generalisations, such as the lack of experienced racism in Australia. Future studies could therefore include Chakmas who have come to Australia as full fee-paying international students.

## 6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on these limitations, some suggestions can be made for future studies. It is hoped that readers of this study, especially those involved in scholarly research, can consider these suggestions in conducting studies in a fast-evolving space.

In this study, I have attempted to design an analytic that would have sufficient explanatory force to enable us to understand the experiences of diasporic minorities in new ways and enable them to create counter-discourses to desubalternise their positions. The study thus has allowed me to suggest new ways of looking into transnational migration, diaspora, and culture retention. In the following sections, I discuss some suggestions based on the critical analysis of the data.

Studies into the lived experiences of diasporic communities involving other minority communities are urgently needed. In Chapters 4 and 5, I discussed the existential plight of the minority among the minorities in Bangladesh, such as the Tripura, the Marma, and many other not-so-educated communities, whose voices remain unheard due to the homogenisation of the minorities in Bangladesh as Chakmas. Therefore, these minorities should be encouraged to take education seriously, and be studied and researched (or engage in this themselves).

At the macro level, policymakers in education and economics need to take a more equitable approach in reform endeavours. It is important that policy-level inclusion of Chakma and other minorities in Bangladesh (and for that matter, minorities in any country) needs to be real rather than tokenistic – the representatives from each community need to be included not only in policymaking and issues of nomenclature/identity but also local knowledge should be included in the curriculum. Countries that

are signatories of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are morally obliged to conform to the Goals to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, particularly reducing inequalities, providing quality education, and fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

For the Bangladesh government, reforms need to involve the equal participation of all members of the community, including democratically elected representatives from all ethnic and religious minority communities. In addition, reforms need to be targeted, measurable, and achievable, rather than vague, general, and tokenistic. There is an urgent need for the Indigenous/Adivasi people to feel safe in their own land, and the Bangladeshi government needs to make sure to provide safety and ensure life with dignity and equality to its minorities.

For the Australian government, a more respectful, inclusive, and humanitarian policy agenda is required to rehabilitate refugees, a lot of whom represent oppressed minorities from all over the world, such as the Rohingya, the Yazidi, and the Kurds arriving in Australia through UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency.

## 6.6 Closing Reflections

This study has demonstrated the importance of education for minorities, and specifically how education can be used as a life-altering tool to facilitate changes in their position in society. I close this study with the same scholar that I began this chapter with. Said (2003) once said: ‘Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate’ (n.p.) Just like history, this thesis is but a construction. It is a study that is situated in space and time, written by a Chakma scholar of a certain age and intellectual disposition, in a certain year and in a certain place, and with a certain agenda in mind. This agenda, no matter how clearly explicated in this study (in terms of the aims of the thesis), will never fully explain how the conclusions I have arrived at are valid in a quantitative, positivist sense. A study like this which is involved so deeply in the storytelling of the participants, in the meaning-making process of their narratives, and at the same time so delicately aware of the discourses and épistémès of the grand narratives of time and space, will always remain incomplete and ephemeral. Despite this, the study adds yet another steppingstone in our continued attempts at better understanding a set of phenomena that only seem more complex the more we research them. Such is the paradox of life.

I close this study with an excerpt from hooks (1990), whose words resonate with my feelings of emotional, intellectual, as well as cognitive catharsis having completed this study:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself.  
No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then

I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew (hooks, 1990, p. 343).

# References

- Adnan, S. (2008). Contestations regarding identity, nationalism and citizenship during the struggles of the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 34(1), 27-45. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41421656>
- Adnan, S. (2013). Land grabs and primitive accumulation in deltaic Bangladesh: Interactions between neoliberal globalization, state interventions, power relations and peasant resistance. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 87-128. doi:10.1080/03066150.2012.753058
- Ahamed, F. U. (2003). *Ethnicity and environment: Tribal culture and state in Bangladesh*. (Unpublished PhD dissertation). University College London, London, UK.
- Ahmad, A. (1987). Jameson's rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory". *Social Text*, 17, 3-25. doi:10.2307/466475
- Ahmed, K. (2010). Defining 'indigenous' in Bangladesh: International law in domestic context. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 17(1), 47-73. doi:10.1163/157181110X12595859744169
- Ahsan, S. A., & Chakma, B. (1989). Problems of national integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Asian Survey*, 29(10), 959-970. doi:10.2307/2644791
- Alamgir, M. (2021, January 30). HSC, equivalent results 2020: GPA 5 galore. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh/news/hsc-equivalent-results-2020-gpa-5-galore-2036401>
- Alfred, M. V. (2015). Diaspora, migration, and globalization: Expanding the discourse of adult education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 146, 87-97. doi:10.1002/ace.20134
- Alkire, S. (2008). Concepts of measures and agency. In K. Basu & R. Kanbur (Eds.), *Arguments for a better world: Essays in honor of Amartya Sen* (pp. 455-474). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Alsop, R., & Heinsohn, N. (2005). *Measuring empowerment in practice: Structuring analysis and framing indicators*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Amin, S., & Chakrabarty, D. (Eds.). (1996). *Subaltern studies IX: Writings on South Asian history and society*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Amnesty International Bangladesh. (2000). *Bangladesh: Human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/136000/asa130012000en.pdf>
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, UK: Verso books.
- Appadurai, A. (2004). The capacity to aspire: Culture and the terms of recognition. In V. Rao & M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and public action* (pp. 59-84). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Arfina, O. F. (2010). Bangladesh politics: Confrontation, monopoly and crisis in governance. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 18(3), 310-333. doi:10.1080/02185377.2010.527224
- Asghari-Fard, M., & Hossain, S. Z. (2017). Identity construction of second-generation Iranians in Australia: Influences and perspectives. *Social Identities*, 23(2), 126-145. doi:10.1080/13504630.2016.1207515

- Asselin, M. E. (2003). Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development*, 19(2), 99-103. doi:10.1097/00124645-200303000-00008
- Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2011). Snowballing sampling. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopaedia of social science research methods* (pp. 1044-1045). doi:10.4135/9781412950589.
- Au, K. H. (1998). Social constructivism and the school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 30(2), 297-319.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011* (No. 3238.0.55.001). Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3238.0.55.001Main+Features1June%202011?OpenDocument=>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). *2016 Census QuickStats country of birth: People in Australia who were born in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7101\\_036](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7101_036)
- Badiuzzaman, M., & Murshed, S. M. (2014). Child school enrollment decisions, perceptions and experiences of conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 20(4), 575-583. doi:10.1515/peps-2014-0042
- Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. (2016). *Bangladesh education statistics*.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Literacy assessment survey 2011*. Retrieved from [https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/7b9bb713\\_5daa\\_48b6\\_bd3e\\_cf072e9be0ce/Literacy%20Assessment%20Survey%202011.pdf](https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/7b9bb713_5daa_48b6_bd3e_cf072e9be0ce/Literacy%20Assessment%20Survey%202011.pdf)
- Bardhan, N. (2012). Postcolonial migrant identities and the case for strategic hybridity: Toward "inter" cultural bridgework. In N. Bardhan & M. P. Orbe (Eds.), *Identity research and communication: Intercultural reflections and future directions* (pp. 149-164). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Barnawi, O. Z., & Phan, L. H. (2015). From western TESOL classrooms to home practice: A case study with two 'privileged' Saudi teachers. *Critical Studies in Education*, 56(2), 259-276. doi:10.1080/17508487.2014.951949
- Barua, B. P. (2001). *Ethnicity and national integration in Bangladesh: A study of the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. New Delhi, India: Har-Anand.
- Barua, B. P., & Wilson, M. (2005). Agroforestry and development: Displacement of Buddhist values in Bangladesh. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 26(2), 232-246. doi:10.1080/02255189.2005.9669042
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219-234.
- Berger, R. (2013). *Immigrant women tell their stories*. Routledge.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46, 5-34. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x
- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712.
- Berry, J. W. (2006). Acculturative stress. In P. T. P. Wong & L. C. S. Wong (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural perspectives on stress and coping* (pp. 287-298). Langley, BC: Springer.
- Berry, J. W., & Hou, F. (2016). Immigrant acculturation and wellbeing in Canada. *Canadian Psychology*, 57(4), 254-264. doi:10.1037/cap0000064

- Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity, community, and difference* (pp. 207-221). London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. (1995). Unpacking my library again. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 28(1), 5-18.
- Bhabha, H. (1996). Culture's in-between. *Questions of cultural identity*, 1, 53-60.
- Bhugra, D. (2004). Migration and mental health. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 109(4), 243-258. doi:10.1046/j.0001-690X.2003.00246.x
- Birrell, K. (2016). *Indigeneity: Before and beyond the law*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Blaikie, N. W. H. (2007). *Approaches to social enquiry: Advancing knowledge* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Bonnerjee, J., Blunt, A., McIlwaine, C., & Pereira, C. (2012). *Connected communities: Diaspora and transnationality*. London, UK: Queen Mary University.
- Bourdieu, P. (2003). Symbolic violence. In R. Célestin, E. DalMolin & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Beyond French Feminisms* (pp. 23-26). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bowers, C. A. (1997). *The culture of denial: Why the environmental movement needs a strategy for reforming universities and public schools*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brown, K. (2006). How do English L1 learners of advanced Japanese infer unknown Kanji words in authentic texts? *Language Learning*, 56(1), 15-34. doi:10.1111/j.0023-8333.2006.00343.x
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Burger, J. (2013). Indigenous peoples in Commonwealth Countries: The legacy of the past and present-day struggles for self-determination. *The Round Table*, 102(4), 333-342. doi:10.1080/00358533.2013.795010
- Byrd, J. A., & Rothberg, M. (2011). Between subalternity and indigeneity: Critical categories for postcolonial studies. *Interventions*, 13(1), 1-12. doi:10.1080/1369801X.2011.545574
- Cairns, A., & Williams, C. (1986). *The politics of gender, ethnicity, and language in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Cavallaro, F. (2005). Language maintenance revisited: An Australian perspective. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(3), 561-582. doi:10.1080/15235882.2005.10162852
- Chakma, A. (2015). Partition of India, incorporation of Chittagong Hill Tracts into Pakistan and the politics of Chakmas: A Review. *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 63(2), 7-32. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1714455808/fulltextPDF/2CD94ABC66F54C44PQ/1?accountid=12528>
- Chakma, B. (2010). The post-colonial state and minorities: Ethnocide in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 48(3), 281-300, doi:10.1080/14662043.2010.489746
- Chakma, B. (2014). *South Asia in transition: Democracy, political economy and security*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chakma, B. (2016). The CHT and the peace process. In A. Riaz & S. Rahman (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of contemporary Bangladesh* (pp. 306-315). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chakma, B. (2018). Security perceptions and practices of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*, 49(1), 83-104. doi:10.11588/iqas.2018.1-2.8704

- Chakma, K., & Hill, G. (2013). Indigenous women and culture in the colonized Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. In K. Visweswaran (Ed.), *Everyday occupations: Experiencing militarism in South Asia and the Middle East* (pp. 132-157). doi:10.9783/9780812207835
- Chakma, K., & Hill, G. (2016). Politics of the orphans of war: 72 children's journey from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to the suburbs of France. In B. D'Costa (Ed.), *Children and violence: Politics of conflict in South Asia* (pp. 132-158). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Chakma, N. K. (2011). Buddhism in Bengal: A brief survey. *Bangladesh E-Journal of Sociology*, 8(1), 37-44.
- Chakma, P. (2021, January 13). Inclusion, cultural integrity and land rights of the Indigenous Peoples in Asia. *The Daily Star*, p. 10.
- Chakma, S. (1985). *Proshongo: Parbattay Chottogram*. Calcutta, India: Nath Brothers.
- Chakma, U. (2020). Fitting in and fighting out: Non-native teachers of English engaging in an Australian ESL environment. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 8(1), 19-39. doi:10.31273/eirj.v8i1.602
- Champagne, D. (2006). Education, culture and nation building: Development of the tribal learning community and educational exchange. In D. Champagne & I. Abu-Saad (Eds.), *Indigenous education and empowerment: International perspectives* (pp. 147-168). Oxford, UK: Rowman Altamira.
- Chatterjee, P., & Jeganathan, P. (Eds.). (2000). *Subaltern studies 11: Community, gender, and violence*. London, England: Hurst.
- Cheng, S. Y., & Jacob, W. J. (2008). American Indian and Taiwan Aboriginal education: Indigenous identity and career aspirations. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 9(3), 233-247. doi:10.1007/BF03026713
- Chereni, A. (2014). Positionality and collaboration during fieldwork: Insights from research with co-nationals living abroad. *Forum, Qualitative Social Research*, 15(3), no. 11. doi:10.17169/fqs-15.3.2058
- Chiswick, B., Lee, Y., & Miller, P. (2005). A longitudinal analysis of immigrant occupational mobility: A test of the immigrant assimilation hypothesis. *The International Migration Review*, 39(2), 332-353. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27645500>
- Choedon, T. (2016). Tibetan women in the remaking and keeping of communal solidarity in Toronto, Canada. *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 93, 89-104. Retrieved from [https://minpaku.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository\\_action\\_common\\_download&item\\_id=4938&item\\_no=1&attribute\\_id=18&file\\_no=1](https://minpaku.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_action_common_download&item_id=4938&item_no=1&attribute_id=18&file_no=1)
- Chowdhury, A. K. (2016, September 7). Women's major role in culture of peace. *Inter Press Service News Agency*. Retrieved from <https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/womens-major-role-culture-peace/>
- Chowdhury, A. R. (2016). Subaltern studies. In S. Ray, H. Schwarz, J. L. V. Berlanga, A. Moreiras & A. Shemak (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of post-colonial studies* (pp. 1-6). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Blackwell.
- Chowdhury, C. (2015). Identity and representation. In F. Achankeng (Ed.), *Nationalism and intra-state conflicts in the postcolonial world* (pp. 325-340). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Chowdhury, K. (2008). Politics of identities and resources in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: Ethnonationalism and/or indigenous identity. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 36(1), 57-78. doi:10.1163/156853108X267567



- Chowdhury, K. (2017). Narratives of nation, war, and peace in South Asia: An interview with Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Kairos: A Journal of Critical Symposium*, 2(1), 121-145.
- Chowdhury, M. J. A. (2011). The determinants of entrepreneurship in a conflict region: Evidence from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 24(2), 265-281, doi:10.1080/08276331.2011.10593538
- Chowdhury, M. S. (2010). State of education. *Between ashes and hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the blind spot of Bangladesh nationalism* (pp. 175-177). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Drishtipat Writers' Collective.
- Chowdhury, M. S. (2018). *Human rights report 2018 on indigenous peoples in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Kapaeeng Foundation.
- Chowdhury, R. (2008). *Globalisation, international education and the marketing of TESOL: Student identity as a site of conflicting forces* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Chowdhury, R., & Le Ha, P. (2014). *Desiring TESOL and international education: Market abuse and exploitation* (Vol. 37). Multilingual Matters.
- Chowdhury, R. (2015). Being and seeing Chakma: Constructing self and other through images. In J. Brown & N. F. Johnson (Eds.), *Children's images of identity: Drawing the self and the other* (pp. 41-56). Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Chowdhury, R. (2019). Embarking on research in the social sciences: Understanding the foundational concepts. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 35(1), 99-113. doi:10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4340
- Chung, B. (2002). Career decision-making self-efficacy and career commitment: Gender and ethnic differences among college students. *Journal of Career Development*, 28(4), 277-284.
- Clifford, J. (2013). *Returns: Becoming indigenous in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clyne, M. G. (1985). *Multilingual Australia: Resources-needs-policies*. Melbourne, Australia: River Seine Publications.
- Cobo, J. R. M. (1986). *Study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations.
- Cohen, R. (2008). *Global diasporas* (2nd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education*. London, England: Routledge.
- Cornelio J, S., & de Castro, D. F. T. (2016). The state of indigenous education in the Philippines today. In J. Xing & P. Ng (Eds.), *Indigenous culture, education and globalization* (pp. 159-179). doi:10.1007/978-3-662-48159-2
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design qualitative quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). Editorial: Mapping the field of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3(2), 95-108. doi:10.1177/1558689808330883
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sydney, Australia: Pearson.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Daes, E. I. A. (1994). Equality of indigenous peoples under the Auspices of the United Nations-draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. *Thomas L. Rev.*, 7, 493-520.
- DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *Geographical Review*, 91(1-2), 441-453. doi:10.2307/3250847

- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham, England: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). California, CA: Sage Publications.
- Department of Immigration and Border Protection. (2016). *Australia's migration trends 2014–15*. Retrieved from <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/migration-trends-14-15-full.pdf>
- Deyhle, D. (1995). Navajo youth and Anglo racism: Cultural integrity and resistance. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(3), 403-445. doi: 10.17763/haer.65.3.156624q12053470n
- Dhamai, B. M. (2014). An overview of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh. In M. S. Chowdhury (Ed.), *Survival under threat: Human rights situation of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh* (pp. 10-26). Chiang Mai, Thailand: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact.
- Dixon, R., Tse, S., Rossen, F., & Sobrun-Maharaj, A. (2009). *Asian immigrant families in New Zealand: The role of family resilience in the settlement experience*. Retrieved from Centre for Asian Health Research and Evaluation, University of Auckland: [https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/assets/fmhs/soph/sch/cahre/docs/AIM\\_Families\\_final%2025\\_11\\_09.pdf](https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/assets/fmhs/soph/sch/cahre/docs/AIM_Families_final%2025_11_09.pdf)
- Dovchin, S. (2019). Language crossing and linguistic racism: Mongolian immigrant women in Australia. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 14(4), 334-351. doi:10.1080/17447143.2019.1566345
- Drydyk, J. (2008). Durable empowerment. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 4(3), 231-245. doi:10.1080/17449620802496354
- Drydyk, J. (2013). Empowerment, agency, and power. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 9(3), 249-262. doi:10.1080/17449626.2013.818374
- Duff, P. A. (2015). Transnationalism, multilingualism, and identity. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 57-80. doi:10.1017/S026719051400018X
- Ewen, S. C. (2011). Unequal treatment: The possibilities of and need for indigenous Parrhesiastes in Australian medical education. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 13(3), 609-615. doi:10.1007/s10903-010-9352-6
- Eyben, R., & Napier-Moore, R. (2009). Choosing words with care? Shifting meanings of women's empowerment in international development. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(2), 285-300.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skin white masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Foley, D. (2003). An examination of indigenous Australian entrepreneurs. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), 133-152.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *The history of sexuality: Volume one: An introduction*. London, UK: Penguin.
- Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and practice*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Cultural action for freedom*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Geertz, C. (2000). *Available light anthropological reflections on philosophical topics*. Princeton, MD: Princeton University Press.
- Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K. J. (1999). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformations. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1025-1046). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Gerharz, E. (2014). Indigenous activism in Bangladesh: Translocal spaces and shifting constellations of belonging. *Asian Ethnicity*, 15(4), 552-570. doi:10.1080/14631369.2014.937112
- Gerharz, E. (2015). What is in a name? Indigenous identity and the politics of denial in Bangladesh. *South Asia Chronicle*, 4, 115–137.
- Gerharz, E., & Land, C. (2018). Uprooted belonging: The formation of a 'Jumma Diaspora' in New York City. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(11), 1881-1896. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1373594
- Gerring, J. (2007). Is there a (viable) crucial-case method? *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(3), 231-253. doi:10.1177/0010414006290784
- Ghosh, S., & Wang, L. (2003). Transnationalism and identity: A tale of two faces and multiple lives. *Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 47(3), 269-282. doi:10.1111/15410064.00022
- Ghoshal, A. (2018). Statelessness or permanent rehabilitation: Issues relating to the Chakmas of Chittagong Hill Tract in Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. In A. Bhattacharyya & S. Basu (Eds.), *Marginalities in India* (pp. 263-277). Singapore, Singapore: Springer.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Research interviewing: The range of techniques: A practical guide*. London, England: Continuum.
- Geertz, C. (2012). *Available light: Anthropological reflections on philosophical topics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1978). *Selections from political writings 1910-1920*. London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Gramsci, A. (1994). Some aspects of the southern question. In Bellamy, R. (Ed.), *Gramsci: Pre-prison writings* (pp. 313-337). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Griffith, A. (1998). Insider / Outsider: Epistemological privilege and mothering work. *A Journal for Philosophy and the Social Sciences*, 21(4), 361-376. doi:10.1023/A:1005421211078
- Grosfoguel, R. (2004). Race and ethnicity or racialized ethnicities? Identities within global coloniality. *Ethnicities*, 4(3), 315-336. doi:10.1177/1468796804045237
- Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2015). Transnational connections, competences and identities: Experiences of Chinese international students after their return 'home'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(6), 947-970. doi:10.1002/berj.3175
- Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Guha, R. (1982). *A rule of property for Bengal: An essay on the idea of permanent settlement*. Hyderabad, India: Orient Blackswan.
- Guha, R. (1989). Dominance without hegemony and its historiography. *Subaltern Studies*, 6, 210-309.
- Guhathakurta, M., & Schendel, W. V. (2013). *The Bangladesh reader: History, culture, politics*. London, England: Duke University Press.
- Guo, K., & Dalli, C. (2012). Negotiating and creating intercultural relations: Chinese immigrant children in New Zealand early childhood education centres. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(3), 129-136. doi:10.1177/183693911203700317
- Guo, S. (2013). *Transnational migration and lifelong learning: Global issues and perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gutierrez, L. M. (1995). Understanding the empowerment process: Does consciousness make a difference? *Social Work Research*, 19(4), 229-237. doi:10.1093/swr/19.4.229
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity, community, culture, and difference* (pp. 222-237). London, England: Lawrence & Wishart.

- Hall, S. (1994). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. In R. Davis & R. Schleifer (Eds.), *Contemporary literary criticism: Literary and cultural studies* (pp. 609–25). New York and London: Longman.
- Hall, S. (1996). Cultural identity and diaspora. In P. Mongia (Ed.), *Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader* (pp. 110–121). London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hall, S. (1997). Introduction: Who needs “identity”. In S. Hall and P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). London, UK: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1999). Thinking the diaspora: Home-thoughts from abroad. *Small Axe*, 6, 1–18.
- Hall, S. (2007). Epilogue: Through the prism of an intellectual life. In B. Meeks (Ed.), *Culture, politics, race and diaspora: The thought of Stuart Hall* (pp. 269–291). Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle/Lawrence and Wishart.
- Halinen, A., & Törnroos, J. A. (2005). Using case methods in the study of contemporary business networks. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(9), 1285–1297. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.02.001
- Hartwich, O. (2011). Selection, migration, and integration: Why multiculturalism works in Australia (and fails in Europe). In Productivity Commission (Ed.), *A Sustainable population? - Key policy issues* (pp.211–221). Canberra, Australia: Roundtable Proceedings.
- Hays, J. (2011). Introduction to the special issue: Indigenous education in Southern Africa: Research and action. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 5(2), 71–75. doi:10.1080/15595692.2011.559770
- Hill, R., & May, S. (2013). Non-indigenous researchers in indigenous language education: Ethical implications. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2013(219), 47–65. doi:10.1515/ijsl-2013-0004
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The active interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hoogvelt, A. (1997). *Globalisation and the postcolonial world: The new political economy of development*. London, England: Macmillan.
- hooks, B. (1990). Marginality as a site of resistance. *Out there: Marginalization and contemporary cultures*, 4, 341–343.
- Hutchinson, R. H. S. (1906). *An account of the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Calcutta, India: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1), 1–12. doi:10.3402/qhw.v9.23606
- Ibrahim, S., & Alkire, S. (2007). Agency and empowerment: A proposal for internationally comparable indicators. *Oxford Development Studies*, 35(4), 379–403. doi:10.1080/13600810701701897
- International Labour Organisation. (1989). *Indigenous and tribal peoples convention, 1989* (No. 169). Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)
- International Organisation for Migration. (2010). *World migration report 2010: The future of migration: Building capacities for change*. Retrieved from [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2010\\_english.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2010_english.pdf)
- Jacob, W. J., & Ha, N. M. (2009). *Ethnic minority and gender issues in Vietnam*. Hanoi, Vietnam: University of Pittsburgh and Asian Development Bank.
- Jacob, W. J., Cheng, S. Y., & Porter, M. K. (2015). *Indigenous education: language, culture and identity*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

- Jain, J. (2017). Held to ransom? The South Asian diaspora and postcolonial Discourse. *Asiatic: IJUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, 11(1), 7-23. Retrieved from <https://journals.iium.edu.my/asiatic/index.php/ajell/article/view/960>
- Jamarani, M. (2012). *Identity, language and culture in diaspora: A study of Iranian female migrants to Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: Monash University Publishing.
- Johnson, D. (2009). Ethnography of language policy. *Language Policy*, 8, 139–159.
- Joshi, K. M., & Basu R. S. (2013). Higher education and participation of indigenous people in India: Some reflections. *Societal Studies*, 5(2), 467–480. Retrieved from <https://repository.mruni.eu/handle/007/10554>
- Joshi, R. (2003). Situation of minorities in Bangladesh. *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, 7(3/4), 103-145.
- Kabeer, N. (1988). Subordination and struggle: Women in Bangladesh. *New Left Review*, 168(1), 95-121.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435-464. doi:10.1111/1467-7660.00125
- Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13-24. doi:10.1080/13552070512331332273
- Kabir, A. & Chowdhury, R. (2021). *The privatisation of higher education in postcolonial Bangladesh*. Routledge.
- Karlberg, M. (2005). The power of discourse and the discourse of power: Pursuing peace through discourse intervention. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10(1), 1-25. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41852070>
- Kaya, A. (2009). *Islam, migration and integration: The age of securitization*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kim, B. S. (2007). Acculturation and enculturation. In F. T. L. Leong, A. G. Inman, A. Ebreo, L. Yang, L. Kinoshita & M. Fu (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian American psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 141–158). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kipp, S., Clyne, M., & Pauwels, A. (1995). *Immigration and Australia's language resources*. Canberra, Australia: Australia Government Public Service.
- Knights, M. (1996). Bangladeshi immigrants in Italy: From geopolitics to micropolitics. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21(1), 105-123. doi:10.2307/622928
- de Kock, L. (1992). An interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Conference in South Africa. *Ariel*, 23(3), 29-47.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research: Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266557>
- Kraidy, M. (2005). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (1988). The cultural discourse of foreign language textbooks. In A. Singerman (Ed.), *Towards a new integration of language and culture* (pp. 63-68). Middlebury, VT: Northeast Conference.
- Kuper, A. (2003). The return of the native. *Current Anthropology*, 44(3), 389-402. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/36812>

- Lao, C. (2004). Parents' attitudes toward Chinese–English bilingual education and Chinese-language use. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 99-121. doi:10.1080/15235882.2004.10162614
- Lather, P. (2006). Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: Teaching research in education as a wild profusion. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), 35-57. doi:10.1080/09518390500450144
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3, 47–57. doi:10.2307/2060063
- Lee, M. B. (1998). *Ethnicity, education and empowerment: Identity construction among minority students in southwestern China* (Unpublished PhD dissertation). South Dakota State University, South Dakota, US.
- Levene, M. (1999). The Chittagong Hill Tracts: A case study in the political economy of “creeping” genocide. *Third World Quarterly*, 20(2), 339–369.
- Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002-1039. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00227.x
- Lewin, T. H. (1869). *The Chittagong Hill Tracts and the people dwelling therein*. Calcutta, India: Bengal Printing Company.
- Lewin, T. H. (1870). *Wild races of South-eastern India*. London, England: WH Allen & Company.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. California, CA: Sage Publication.
- Liu, S. (2015). *Identity, hybridity and cultural home: Chinese migrants and diaspora in multicultural societies*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ma Rhea, Z. (2009). Indigenising international education in business. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 2(2), 15-27. doi:10.1108/18363261080001594
- Ma Rhea, Z. (2012). Partnership for improving outcomes in Indigenous education: Relationship or business? *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(1), 45-66. doi:10.1080/02680939.2011.621030
- Ma Rhea, Z. (2015). *Leading and managing indigenous education in the postcolonial world*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Macaulay, T. B. (1835). *Macaulay's Minute on Education*. Council of India. Retrieved from [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html)
- Mackenzie, N., & Kipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16(2), 193-205.
- Martinot, S. (2008). *The coloniality of power: Notes towards decolonisation*. Retrieved from <https://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~marto/coloniality.htm>
- May, S. (2005), Language rights: Moving the debate forward. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 9, 319-347. doi:10.1111/j.1360-6441.2005.00295.x
- McAuliffe, C. (2008). Transnationalism within: Internal diversity in the Iranian diaspora. *Australian Geographer*, 39(1), 63-80. doi:10.1080/00049180701877436
- Meaney, T., & Evans, D. (2013). What is the responsibility of mathematics education to the Indigenous students that it serves? *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 82(3), 481-496. doi:10.1007/s10649-012-9439-1
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis*, 1(1), 1-17.

- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). California, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mignolo, W. (2001). Coloniality of power and subalternity. In I. Rodríguez (Ed.), *The Latin American subaltern studies reader* (pp. 424–443). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ministry of Education, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh. (2010). *National educational policy 2010*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/02.National-Education-Policy-2010-English.pdf>
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview-narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct* (p. 233–255). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Mohaiemen, N. (Ed.). (2010). *Between ashes and hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the blind spot of Bangladesh nationalism*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Drishtipat Writers' Collective.
- Mohsin, A. (2000). *The politics of Nationalism: The case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Press Limited.
- Mohsin, A. (2002). Rights of minorities. In H. Hossain (Ed.), *Human rights in Bangladesh* (pp. 243-244). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Ain O Salish Kendra (Legal Aid and Advice Centre).
- Mohsin, A. (2003). *The Chittagong hill tracts, Bangladesh: On the difficult road to peace*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Mohsin, A. (2010). Genocide and the Modern State. *Pakistan Journal of International Relations*, 1(2).
- Moje, E. B. (2004). Powerful spaces: Tracing the out-of-school literacy spaces of Latino/a youth. In K. M. Leander & M. Sheehy (Eds.), *Spatializing literacy research and practice* (pp. 15-38). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Mruck, K., & Breuer, F. (2003, May). Subjectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research—The FQS issues. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 4(2), 23. doi:10.17169/fqs-4.2.696
- Nandy, A. (1996). *The multiverse of democracy: Essays in honour of Rajni Kothari*. London, England: Sage.
- Nandy, A. (2000). Gandhi after Gandhi after Gandhi. *The Little Magazine*, 1(1). Retrieved from <http://www.littlemag.com/nandy.htm>
- Nandy, A. (2009). The hour of the untamed cosmopolitan. *Tehelka Magazine*, 6, 21-30.
- Nazimuddin, S. K. (2014). Social mobility and role of education in promoting social mobility. *International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Research*, 3(5), 176-179. Retrieved from <https://www.ijser.in/archives/v3i7/IJSER15364.pdf>
- Ndhlovu, F. (2010). Belonging and attitudes towards ethnic languages among African migrants in Australia. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 30(3), 299-321. doi:10.1080/07268601003678643
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2014). Global coloniality and the challenges of creating African futures. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36(2), 181-202. doi:10.35293/srsa.v36i2.189
- Nepram, B. (2003). Accord into discord: Conflict and the 1997 peace accord of Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, 7(3-4), 146-168. Retrieved from <http://www.himalayanresearch.org/pdf/2003-4-5/Vol07%20N3-4final.pdf#page=151>

- Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Newland, K. (2010). *Voice after exit: Diaspora advocacy*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Nightingale, D. J., & Cromby, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Nugroho, D., & Lietz, P. (2011). *Meta-analysis of AusAID surveys of current and former scholarship awardees*. Melbourne, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing feminist research* (pp.30-61). London, England: Routledge.
- Oldham, P. & Miriam, A. F. (2008). "We the Peoples ...": The United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. *Anthropology Today*, 24(2), 5–9.
- O'Reilly, M., & Kiyimba, N. (2015). *Advanced qualitative research: A guide to using theory*. California, CA: Sage.
- O'Toole, J., & Becket, D. (2010). *Educational research: Creative thinking and doing*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Park, S. M., & Sarkar, M. (2007). Parents' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children and their efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language: A case study of Korean-Canadian immigrants. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 20(3), 223-235. doi:10.2167/lcc337.0
- Pelican, M. (2009). Complexities of indigeneity and autochthony: An African example. *American Ethnologist*, 36(1), 52-65. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.01109.x
- Phan, L. H. (2011). The writing and culture nexus: Writers' comparisons of Vietnamese and English academic writing. In L. H. Phan & B. Baurain (Eds.), *Voices, identities, negotiations, and conflicts: Writing academic English across cultures* (pp. 23-40). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi:10.1163/9780857247209\_003
- Phan, L. H. (2015). Unequal Englishes in imagined intercultural interactions. In Tupas R. (Ed.), *Unequal Englishes* (pp. 223-243). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Phan, L. H. (2017, July). [Review of the book *The political economy of schooling in Cambodia: Issues of quality and equity*, by Y. Kitamura, D. B. Edwards, C. Sitha & J. H. Williams]. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 32(2), 416-419. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44668424>
- Piper, N. (2009). The complex interconnections of the migration–development nexus: A social perspective. *Population, Space and Place*, 15(2), 93-101.
- Punch, K. (2005). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage Publications.
- Quijano, A. (1997). El silencio y la escritura. *Quehacer*, 107, 79-81.
- Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 215-232. doi:10.1177/0268580900015002005
- Quijano, A. 2007. Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178. doi:10.1080/09502380601164353
- Quijano, A. (2010). América Latina: hacia un nuevo sentido histórico. *Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir y cambios civilizatorios*, 55–71.
- Rajendran, D., Ng, E. S., Sears, G., & Ayub, N. (2020). Determinants of migrant career success: A study of recent skilled migrants in Australia. *International Migration*, 58(2), 30-51. doi:10.1111/imig.12586



- Rashiduzzaman, M. (1998). Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord: Institutional features and strategic concerns. *Asian Survey*, 38, 653-670.
- Redclift, V. (2015). Displacement, integration and identity in the postcolonial world. *Identities*, 23(2), 1-19. doi:10.1080/1070289X.2015.1008001
- Reynolds, R. J. (2005). The education of indigenous Australian students: Same story, different hemisphere. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 7(2), 48-55.
- Richards, B. N. (2008). Hybrid identities in the Diaspora: Second-generation west Indians in Brooklyn. In K. E. I. Smith & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Hybrid identities* (pp. 265-289). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- Riggs, E. M. (2005). Field-based education and indigenous knowledge: Essential components of geoscience education for Native American communities. *Science Education*, 89(2), 296-313. doi:10.1002/sce.20032
- Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Rolls, C., & Chamberlain, M. (2004). From east to west: Nepalese women's experiences. *International Nursing Review*, 51(3), 176-184. doi:10.1111/j.1466-7657.2004.00236.x
- Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 305-320.
- Rowland, R. C. (1986). The relationship between the public and the technical spheres of argument: A case study of the Challenger Seven disaster. *Central States Speech Journal*, 37(3), 136-146.
- Roy, C. K. (2004). *Indigenous women: A gendered perspective*. Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino, Norway: Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Roy, R. D. (2003). *Indigenous rights in Bangladesh: Land rights and self government in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. New Delhi, India: India International Centre.
- Roy, R. D. (2004). The land question and the Chittagong Hill Tracts accord. *Land: A Journal of the Practitioners, Development and Research Activists*, 11(7), 43-65.
- Safran, W. (2005). The Jewish diaspora in a comparative and theoretical perspective. *Israel Studies*, 10(1), 36-60. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30245753>
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism: Western concepts of the Orient*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Said, E. (1979). *The question of Palestine*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Said, E. (1984). Permission to narrate. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 13(3), 27-48.
- Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Said, E. (1997). *Orientalism culture and imperialism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Said, E. (1999). *Out of place: A memoir*. London, England: Granta Publications.
- Said, E. (2003, July 20). Blind imperial arrogance. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-jul-20-oe-said20-story.html>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). London, England: Sage.
- Sattar, A. (1983). *In the Sylvan Shadows*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangla Academy.
- Sawar, M. G. (1980). *ERD Government of Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Global Energy Review and Bangladesh.
- van Schendel, W. (1992). The Invention of the 'Jummas': State formation and ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh. *Modern Asian Studies*, 26(1), 95-128.
- van Schendel, W. (1995). *Reviving a rural industry: Silk producers and officials in India and Bangladesh 1880s to 1980s*. New Delhi, India: Manohar Publications.

- van Schendel, W. (2001). Who speaks for the nation? Nationalist rhetoric and the challenge of cultural pluralism in Bangladesh. In W. Van Schendel & E. J. Zürcher (Eds.), *Identity politics in Central Asia and the Muslim world: Nationalism, ethnicity and labour in the twentieth century* (pp. 107-147). London, UK: I.B.Tauris.
- van Schendel, W. (2009). *A history of Bangladesh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- van Schendel, W. (2012). *Mengjialaguo shi*. Shanghai, China: Dongfang chubian zhongxin.
- Scheurich, J. (1997). *Research method in the postmodern*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- Schönpflug, U. (Ed.). (2008). *Cultural transmission: Psychological, developmental, social, and methodological aspects*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schulz, H. L., & Hammer, J. (2003). *The Palestinian diaspora: Formation of identities and politics of homeland*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Sen, A. (1985). Well-being, agency and freedom: The Dewey lectures 1984. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82(4), 169-221.
- Sen, A. (1994). Freedom and needs: An argument for the primacy of political rights. *The New Republic*, 34-35.
- Sen, A. (1995). Gender inequality and theories of justice. In M. C. Nussbaum & J. Glover (Eds.), *Women, culture and development: A study of human capabilities* (pp. 259-273). Oxford, UK: University Press.
- Sen, A. (1997). *Resources, values, and development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford, UK: University Press.
- Shakya, D. (2008). *Universal education, culture and socio-economic development in Kathmandu Valley: A case of the Newars in Nepal*. (Unpublished master's thesis). East West University, Bangladesh.
- Shuval, J. T. (2000). Diaspora migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm. *International Migration*, 38(5), 41-56. doi:10.1111/1468-2435.00127
- Siar S. (2013). *From highly skilled to low skilled: Revisiting the deskilling of migrant labour*. Makati City, Philippines: Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
- Siddiqui, T. (2003, June). *Migration as a livelihood strategy for the poor: The Bangladesh case*. Paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration Development Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, Dhaka.
- Singh, A. (2008). South African Indian migration in the twenty-first century: Towards a theory of 'triple identity'. *Asian Ethnicity*, 9(1), 5-16. doi:10.1080/14631360701803187
- Singh, D. K. (2010). *Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*. New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Zed Books.
- Smith, L. T. (2013). The future is now. In M. Rashbrooke (Ed.), *Inequality: A New Zealand crisis* (pp. 227-234). Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books.
- Smyth, A., & Holian, R. (2008). Credibility issues in research from within organisations. In P. Sikes & A. Potts (Eds.), *Researching education from the inside: Investigation from within* (pp. 41-56). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Soja, E. W. (1996). *Third space: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

- Sonn, C. C. (2002). Immigrant adaptation. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community* (pp. 205-222). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Spivak, G. C., Nelson, C., & Grossberg, L. (1988). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*.
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Staszak, J. (2009). Other/Otherness. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 8, 43-47.
- Stavenhagen, R. (2015). Ruta Mixteca: Indigenous rights and Mexico's plunge into globalization. *Latin American Perspectives*, 42(4), 92-102.
- Story, J., & Walker, I. (2015). The impact of diasporas: Markers of identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(2), 135-141. doi:10.1080/01419870.2016.1105999
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Streeton, R., Cooke, M., & Campbell, J. (2004). Researching the researchers: Using a snowballing technique. *Nurse Researcher*, 12(1), 35. doi:10.7748/nr2004.07.12.1.35.c5929
- Sundaram, M. S., Sekar, M., & Subburaj, A. (2014). Women empowerment: Role of education. *International Journal in Management & Social Science*, 2(12), 76-85.
- Swain, A. (2005). *Education as social action*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Swatuk, L. A. (2005). Social movements and the "Education Revolution" in post-apartheid South Africa. In A. Swain (Ed.), *Education as social action* (pp. 178-204). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Taylor, K. (2011, October 5). Threatened families find homes in Korea. *The Korea Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.koreaherald.com>
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). In-depth interviewing. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 3, 87-116.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246.
- Thomas, G. (2011). A typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse, and structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(6), 511-521. doi:10.1177/1077800411409884
- Tripura, P. (1992). The colonial foundation of Pahari ethnicity. *The Journal of Social Studies*, 68, 1-16.
- Tripura, P. (2010). Colonial foundation of Pahari ethnicity. In N. Mohaiemen (Ed.), *Between ashes and hope*, (pp. 237-244). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Drishtipat Writers' Collective.
- Trowler, V. (2013). May the subaltern speak? Researching the invisible 'other' in higher education. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 4(1), 42-54. doi:10.1080/21568235.2013.851614
- Trudgett, M. (2009). Build it and they will come: Building the capacity of Indigenous units in universities to provide better support for Indigenous Australian postgraduate students. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 38(1), 9-18. doi:10.1375/S1326011100000545
- Uddin, A. (2015). Education in peace-building: The case of Post-Conflict Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 15(1), 59-76.
- Uddin, N. (2005). History is the story for existence: A case study of Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Asian Profile*, 33(4), 391-412.

- Uddin, N. (2010). Politics of cultural difference: Identity and marginality in the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. *South Asian Survey*, 17(2), 283-294.
- United Nations. (2007). *The United Nations declarations on the rights of peoples*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>
- Usher, R. (1996). A critique of the neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. In D. Scott & R. Usher (Eds.), *Understanding educational research* (pp.9-32). London, England: Routledge.
- Visser, J. (2015). Rural-urban migration and redefining indigeneity in Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Asian in Focus*, 53-57. Retrieved from [http://www.asiainfocus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Jacco\\_Visser.pdf](http://www.asiainfocus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Jacco_Visser.pdf)
- Visser, J., & Gerharz, E. (2016). Mobility aspirations and indigenous belonging among Chakma students in Dhaka. *South Asian History and Culture*, 7(4), 370-385. doi:10.1080/19472498.2016.1223718
- Volkan, V. D. (1999). Individual and large-group identity: Parallels in development and characteristics in stability and crisis. *Croatian Medical Journal*, 40(4), 458-465.
- Wiersma, W. (1995). *Research methods in education: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Allyn Bacon Inc.
- Yi, L. (2008). *Cultural exclusion in China: State education, social mobility and cultural difference*. London, England: Routledge.
- Yin, R. K. (2004). *The case study anthology*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). How to do better case studies. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 254-282). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Young, R. (1995). *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture, and race*. London, England: Routledge.
- Zucker, D. (2009). *How to do case study research (School of Nursing Faculty Publication Series, paper 2)*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Zweig, D., Changgui, C., & Rosen, S. (2004). Globalization and transnational human capital: Overseas and returnee scholars to China. *The China Quarterly*, 179, 735-757. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20192378>

# Appendices

## Appendix I Explanatory Statement



**MONASH** University

**Project title: Ethnicity, Education and Empowerment: Identity Construction of Chakma minority Immigrants in Melbourne<sup>2</sup>**

**Chief Investigator's name:**

**Associate Professor Zane Ma Rhea**

Department of Education

Phone: +61 3 9904 XXXX

email: XXX@monash.edu

**Student's name:**

**Urmee Chakma**

Phone: (03) XXXXXXXXXX

email: XXX@monash.edu

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

### **What does the research involve?**

The aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences of Chakmas who have immigrated to Melbourne permanently.

After reading this statement and signing the consent form, you will participate in an interview of approximately 45-60 minutes, which will be conducted face to face, and audio-recorded at a time and place of convenience in a place of your choice (e.g. a public library, community learning centre). During the interview, you will be asked a set of questions. If you find any information, which is incorrect, you will be able to delete or change it. You will be given the option to review the transcription of the interview and have one week to review the transcript, but if you need more time, please inform the research team. You may withdraw your interview data at any point until you approve the transcript of the interview.

### **Why were you chosen for this research?**

You have been chosen as a participant because you responded to my Facebook advertisement and have been living in Melbourne for some time.

### **Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

Being a participant of this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to take part and you should not feel any pressure to do so. This research adheres to the strict standards of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). Therefore, if you wish to participate in this research, please sign and return the consent form to Ms. Urmee Chakma (see Consent Form). If you do consent and change your mind, you can withdraw at any point during the data collection process, and all data collected from you will be withdrawn from the study.

### **Possible benefits and risks to participants**

---

<sup>2</sup> The title as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original Research Proposal was submitted for Ethics Approval in

Participating in this research provides an opportunity to share your views. This research may also contribute to the other ethnic minorities in other countries to take education seriously, particularly to other other minorities in CHT who might be interested to come to Australia by using education in the future.

This research involves low risk and the participation is based on voluntary willingness with all rights to withdraw from the research at any time. This research will be conducted within minimum harm, discomfort or any inconveniences for you as the participant. In addition, the information gathered from you will be used anonymously where your responses will be referred to a pseudonym.

### **Confidentiality**

Efforts will be made to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the data. The identities of the participants and the information collected will remain confidential, and only known to the researchers. Any published information referring to the data in this research will use pseudonyms or codes.

### **Storage of data**

Storage of the data collected will adhere to Monash University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked filing cabinet and on a password protected computer. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

### **Indicate when the data will be destroyed when it is no longer required.**

The data stored in both filing cabinet and electronic devices will be erased and deleted securely.

### **Use of data for other purposes**

The data may be used for publications other than thesis, including journal and conference papers. However, the data collected will remain confidential, anonymous and will be accessible only to the researchers. Only aggregate de-identified data may be used for other projects where ethics approval has been granted.

### **Results**

If you would like to be informed of the research findings, please contact Urmee Chakma by email: [Urmee.chakma@monash.edu](mailto:Urmee.chakma@monash.edu) or my mobile number +61 423 753 451

### **Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Room 111, Chancellery Building E,  
26 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 xxxx      Email: [muhrec@monash.edu](mailto:muhrec@monash.edu)

Fax: +619905 xxxx

Thank you,

Associate professor Zane Ma Rhea



**MONASH University**

## CONSENT FORM

**Project ID: 17673**

**Project: Ethnicity, Education and Empowerment: Identity Construction among minority Chakma Immigrants in Melbourne<sup>3</sup>**

**Chief Investigator:**

**A/Professor Zane Ma Rhea**

Department of Education

Phone: +613 9905 XXXX

Email: XXX@monash.edu

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
1. I agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the explanatory statement which I have read.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I agree to allow the interview to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The data that I provide during this research may be used by the researcher in future research projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw myself at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in anyway.

I understand that any data the researches extracts from the interviews for use in reports or public findings will not under any circumstances contain names or identifying characteristics.

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> The title as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original Research Proposal was submitted for Ethics Approval in December 2018.

## Appendix III Interview Prompts

Before I start the interview phase, I would like to ask you for a code name. I will use your code name instead of your real name on all the data except for the master list (write down code name). Now I would like to start the first phase of the interview. It will take approximately 45 minutes. If you decide that you want to continue to the next interview phase, we may do that after you have had a chance to take a break, or we can schedule the second phase later today or another time. Please make yourself comfortable. During this first phase, I will be asking you questions about your life in CHT /Rangamati/Khagrachhari. Please feel free to let me know if there is a question that you do not understand or if there is a question you would like to skip.

### **Interview prompts for the first round interview**

The first phase focuses on participants' life histories (60-90 minutes)

Questions:

- a) What was it like to grow up in Rangamati/Khagrachhari? What was the place like?
- b) How did you perceive yourself as a child? Were you a motivated student? Did you think education was very important? Why?
- c) What was the environment in your home about education? Did you get lots of encouragement from your parents? Relatives or other people?
- d) Can you please tell me the educational background of your family? Such as, are you first/second generation university graduate?
- e) Did you think of leaving CHT/ Bangladesh when you were growing up?
- f) Why did you decide to go to Dhaka to study?

### **Interview Two - The second phase focuses on participants' educational and migration experience and retaining their identity as Chakmas (45 Minutes)**

Before we start the interview, I will ask if there is anything that came up after last interview- additional memories, reflections, things that you wanted to discuss in regards to our previous interview that you didn't have a chance to talk about or remembered.

- a) How long have you been living here? And how did you come to Melbourne? AusAID? Self-finance?
- b) Let's start with your experience as an international student in Australia. Can you tell me briefly your first few days/weeks?
- c) Can you please describe a typical day as a student both in and out of University?
- d) What was it like to live here? Can you please describe a typical day when in both in and out of university.
- e) So after you went back home, what was your experience? Were you happy to be home?
- f) Why have you decided or why did you decide to continue to live in Melbourne/Australia?
- g) Describe what it was like to arrive in Melbourne/Australia as a permanent resident /temporary resident



- h) What was your settlement experience as a temporary/permanent resident, your settlement experiences?
- i) What was it like to understand a new culture? What was it like to be a minority from a country like BD? Did you feel the same way you felt while studying in BD?
- j) Can you describe who you reached out to when you needed some help? What kind of needs were they? Financial, social, emotional?
- k) How often do you go back to CHT and why? Do you keep regular contact with CHT? Why? How?

**We will take a 15-minute break now. I will ask you some more questions after the break, is that ok? The final session focuses on participants meaning of their lived experiences of retaining their Chakma identity in Melbourne.**

- a) What language do you speak with your children at home? Why?
- b) Do you teach your children Chakma language and culture? Why/why not? How?
- c) How important is it for you to meet and keep in touch with other Chakmas here?
- d) Has your education in Australia made you feel differently about Bangladesh/Chakma? If so, how?
- e) If they are Australian - Do you consider yourself as Australian first, or a Bangladeshi or Chakma? Why? Do you feel proud of being an Australian?
- f) So you talked about your educational experiences in BD and here, based on what you've said, how do you feel about your experiences from being a Chakma minority to becoming an Australian resident (after all, you are still a minority here) ?
- g) How do you feel about your living situation? Social time? How do you feel about your Chakma identity today, compared to when you first arrived in Australia? How would you describe your sense of pride in it?
- h) What have you learnt about yourself from your experiences? Prompts- in what area did you need more support? Alternatively, in what situations did you feel most comfortable or most vulnerable? How easy or hard has it been of not being in CHT? Have there been strategies you have used to adapt to the new culture and make new friends? Overall, what, if any, strategies helped you adapt to living in Melbourne? What was not helpful to you? What do you wish could have been different?
- i) Are you concerned in any way that more and more Chakmas are emigrating outside Bangladesh over the years? Why? Why not?
- j) What advice would you give to other Chakmas who want to immigrate to Australia permanently?
- k) Is there anything else you'd like to say or add to this interview?

#### Appendix IV Question Prompts for Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion will be audio-recorded. Individual responses from the two first-round interviews may be referred for prompts, however, without identifying the respondents. Question prompts as follows:

- 1) Some of you said this (...) regarding the social gatherings in Melbourne; can you give me an example of how you see it as a practice related to your attempts in continuing the Chakma culture?
- 2) Some of you said that Chakmas would assimilate into Australian society a generation later, while others did not agree. Can you tell me more about your hopes and frustrations, optimism and fears in this regard?
- 3) Those of you who have studied here have mentioned how your educational experiences have shaped the way you have eventually started viewing yourselves (constructed your identities). Can you tell me more in this regard?
- 4) One of you mentioned that they would prefer to be identified as a "Jumma" (an inclusive term) rather than a Chakma, what do others think about that?
- 5) Some of you talked about an official and recognised Chakma Council based in Sydney - are you all members in that Council and have you done anything for CHT through that Council? What is the purpose of this Council? Any suggestions into making it more effective in terms of its role in supporting and promoting Chakma culture among the Australian resident Chakma community?

**Full name (Block letters)**

**Contact Numbers**

**Email address**

**Educational qualifications**

**Current profession**

**Marital status**

**Number of children**

**Age**

**Years of Residency in Australia**

**Permanent resident/Citizen of Australia**

## Appendix VI Social Media Notice for Participant Recruitment

**5<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Dear fellow Facebook users, as part of my PhD research project I am conducting a study on Chakma immigrants from Bangladesh who are currently living in Melbourne. The title of my study is 'Ethnicity, Education and Empowerment: Identity Construction of Chakma Minority Immigrants in Melbourne'.

If you are a Chakma, living in Melbourne and either a permanent resident or a citizen of Australia, you are in an ideal position for an interview. Participants would be asked to participate in an initial interview, which would take no longer than an hour.

Your responses will be kept confidential. You would be assigned a pseudonym. If you are willing to participate or have any questions, please private message me or contact me via email at [Urmee.Chakma@monash.edu](mailto:Urmee.Chakma@monash.edu).

Thank you for your time.

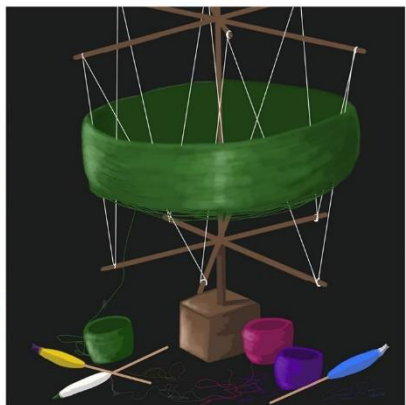
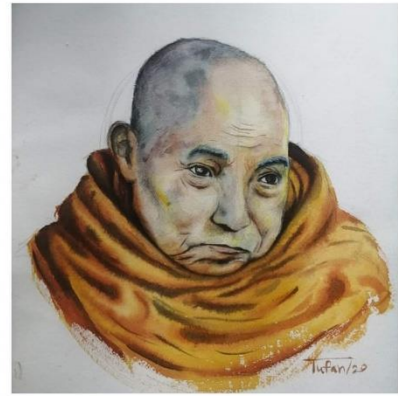
Regards,

Urmee

## Appendix VII Gita's Prayer Corner



Appendix VIII Tufan's Artbin





## The Daily Star



A group of Mro community members play their traditional musical instruments in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday, as a sign of protest over the luxury hotel that is being built on their ancestral land in Chattogram Hill Tracts.

PHOTO:  
PRABIR DAS

