

# Language and Culture of Minority Ethnic Groups

**Class Six**



**NATIONAL CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK BOARD, BANGLADESH**

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# **Language and Culture of Minority Ethnic Groups**

## **Class Six**

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## Preface

The aim of secondary education is to make the learners fit for entry into higher education by flourishing their latent talents and prospects with a view to building the nation with the spirit of the Language Movement and the Liberation War. To make the learners skilled and competent citizens of the country based on the economic, social, cultural and environmental settings is also an important issue of secondary education.

The textbooks of secondary level have been written and compiled according to the revised curriculum 2012 in accordance with the aims and objectives of National Education Policy-2010. Contents and presentations of the textbooks have been selected according to the moral and humanistic values of Bengali tradition and culture and the spirit of Liberation War 1971 ensuring equal dignity for all irrespective of caste and creed of different religions and sex.

The present government is committed to ensure the successful implementation of Vision 2021. Honorable Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina expressed her firm determination to make the country free from illiteracy and instructed the concerned authority to give free textbooks to every student of the country. National Curriculum and Textbook Board started to distribute textbooks free of cost since 2010 according to her instruction.

The society and the culture of minority Ethnic Groups living in Bangladesh are different from those of others. We are proud of that society and culture of Minority Ethnic Groups as a part of our national heritage. But the larger section of the population knows very little diverse cultures of these communities. To give attention to this sector according to the revised curriculum NCTB has developed a textbook named '**Language and Culture of Minority Ethnic Groups**' for the first time. In this book, different subject matters related to language and culture of Minority Ethnic Groups have been discussed. It is expected that the students will be respectful towards others' language and culture by practicing these subject matters.

I thank sincerely all for their intellectual labor who were involved in the process of revision, writing, editing, art and design of the textbook.

**Prof. Narayan Chandra Saha**

Chairman

National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Bangladesh

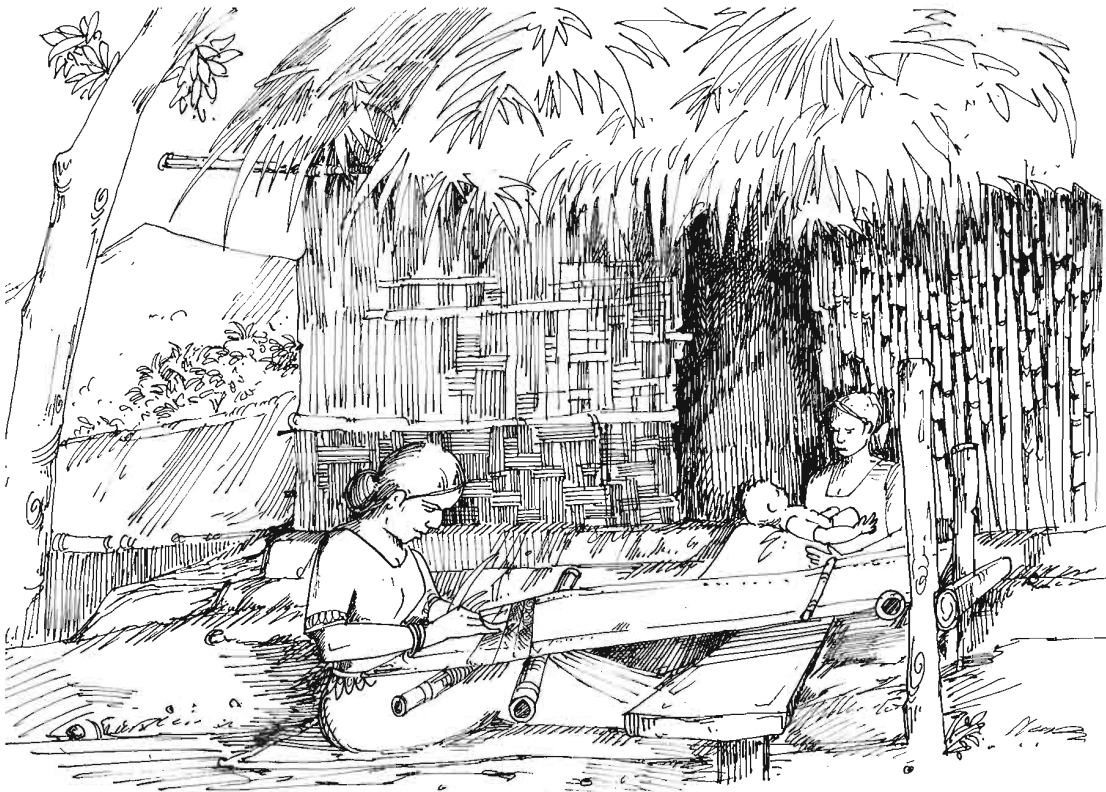
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# CHAPTER-ONE

## CULTURAL PROFILE OF BANGLADESH

Culture is our way of life. It also bears our identity. As there are enormous diversities in nature, we find numerous colourful variations in cultures too. Anthropology is the discipline that studies man and his culture. In this chapter, we would learn about different aspects of culture and anthropology. We can enrich ourselves and develop our country through knowing about different cultures in addition to our own. This chapter also gives us an overview of different ethnic and linguistic groups of our county and their locations.



**Fig. 1.1: Cultural Life**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES –

On completion of this chapter, we would be able to:

- Describe the concept of culture;
- Identify different components of culture;
- Explain the cultural features of Bangladesh.

## LESSON- 01: INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Ratul's annual examination was over in December. During the vacation, he had a trip to Canada with his uncle. His uncle lives in Toronto. Ratul visited many places in Canada with his uncle's family. As it was winter there, the cities and villages in Canada were covered with white snow. The more he saw, the more Ratul became amazed. What a wonderful snowy land is this, Ratul thought!

The people of Canada, too, are quite different. In Toronto, there were people from many countries of the world. Not only were they different in appearance but their language was also not comprehensible to Ratul and the languages they speak were also unfamiliar to Ratul. Some of the people were from Africa, some from China and perhaps many were from Europe or other parts of America. Ratul found it quite amazing that so many nationals are residing in the same country! Ratul wandered 'I wish I could talk to them!' He had many queries in his mind like how they live in such cold weather, how they walk over the snow, what their favourite foods are, or what type of games they like to play etc. What a fun would it have been, if he could learn their languages! He could have learnt everything about them.

Ratul's uncle took them for a trip to the Baffin Island. It is the largest island of Canada close to the North Pole. For most part of the year, it remains covered with snow. What is more surprising is that sun does not rise at all in winter, During that time, this region is covered in darkness day after day and for months together. At that time, magnificent displays of colourful natural lights are visible in the sky. Strangely the same place never gets dark in summer as the sun never sets. At that time, the sun is visible even at the midnight. How wonderful and unbelievable it is! Before coming here, Ratul had not even imagined that people could live in such a strange place covered with darkness. The Inuit ethnic people live in the Baffin Island. They are also known as the Eskimos. As this region remains covered with snow throughout the year, vegetation is almost absent there. Even cultivation, too, is impossible. For that reason, the Inuit people mainly live on fishing and hunting different types of animals. In order to survive in this extreme cold weather, they make dresses with the skin of an animal called Caribou. The Inuit people are very different in their appearance, houses, dresses, behaviours and language. Ratul became more amazed to see the the Inuit house 'Igloo', made of snow. How a man can live in a snow-house! Ratul thinking his Bangladeshi friends would never believe this!



Fig. 1.2: Igloo- an ice made house of the Inuits.

During his tour in Canada, Ratul had been in an unfamiliar and strange world. There he was different and a stranger amongst all. Before going to Canada, Ratul was not familiar with the ideas and thoughts, activities and behaviour of the people living there. Canada is like a different world to him.

This new world has been far different from his ever-known Bangladesh. Bangladesh is much different from Canada in terms of the appearances of people, landscapes and climate. There exist many contrasts in the manners, norms, behaviours and activities of the peoples of these two countries. Ratul was quite surprised at these differences and variations; and all these made him rather more curious. He thought, 'even though we are all human beings, why do such differences exist between peoples of Bangladesh and Canada? Why are such immense dissimilarities in the lifestyles and languages of various ethnic groups? Do such differences as well exist between us and people of other regions of the world?'

During his Canada tour, Ratul was mostly overwhelmed by observing the cultural differences. What made him more inquisitive was the experience of witnessing different beliefs, norms, rituals, customs and behaviours of various groups of people. Ratul discovered a wide range of differences between his own familiar culture and that of Canada. These very cultural differences amazed him the most. When we travel abroad or even other places of our own country, we encounter many strange or unfamiliar events or experiences, we feel amazed. This happens because of cultural diversities. The way air surrounds us every moment and its oxygen keeps us alive, our culture, too, encircles us always in the same manner. The way of living our life is our culture.

All communities have their own Culture. Culture of one place could be different from that of another area. Culture teaches us how to live in the snow covered regions of Canada or on the plains or on the river banks of Bangladesh. It also teaches how to cultivate crops on the hills or in the desert. Culture contains our ideas and thoughts, norms and customs, perceptions and behaviours. From our very childhood, culture teaches us when and how to talk to other people, how to behave, what to do. It is from culture, we learn norms and behaviours, rules and customs, manners and etiquettes to live in society with other people. Culture thus helps us learn to live in harmony with others in the society.

Anthropology is the detailed study of man and culture. Anthropology studies people of different regions of the world, their structure, origin, development importance and such other things. It also does comparative studies between different cultures. Anthropos means "human" and therefore, anthropology is



also said to be the ‘science of humanity’. These days, anthropology has become a global discipline, and anthropologists are studying all types of societies and cultures. There are four major subfields of anthropology. A brief introduction to these is given below:

1. **Cultural anthropology :** Cultural anthropology studies the cultural diversity of people of different regions. For understanding cultural diversity, this subfield focuses on daily activities, ideas, norms and values, customs and behaviours of human beings.
2. **Physical anthropology :** Physical anthropology studies the various physical traits of people around the world. In doing so, physical anthropology studies a number of topics ranging from the study of fossils and skeletons of early human beings, DNA, food habits and nutrition, measure of skulls, fingerprints of early and modern humans and such things.
3. **Linguistic anthropology :** Linguistic anthropology studies origin, structure and forms of different languages. It also compares languages of different cultures by studying the use of languages, alphabets, variations in pronunciations etc.
4. **Archaeological anthropology :** Archaeological anthropology studies the past and present cultures of different regions by studying the material remains and relics of the past. This subfield analyzes all sorts of artefacts of human culture— from the remnants buried under the dust of the ancient cities to all other materials and artefacts used by the people of the past and present times.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Explain culture in a table.

**Task-2 :** Make a list of the branches of anthropology.

## LESSON- 02: CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Each and every one on the earth has culture. Culture is the sum total of knowledge, beliefs, arts, rules and regulations, ideas and values, norms and customs, laws, habits and behaviors of human being. We have to work and produce food for survival. It analyses all sorts of artifacts of human culture from those of ancient cities found buried under the soil to those used by human being in the past and in modern time. Humans also abide by the customs, beliefs and religions of society. Cultural education starts from the family. For example, the first lesson of culture learning after birth is our mother tongue. And

henceforward, we begin to learn culture from the family and other members of the society. Entire life style itself is the culture of human beings. According to anthropologist's cultures is the sum total of different components such as

- **Knowledge:** People need to rely on their own cultural knowledge. People of every culture have their own knowledge of the source, production, collection and preparation of food which is essential for their survival. By applying their knowledge they build places to live or adapt to their surrounding environment.
- **Belief:** Every culture consists of some beliefs regarding the universe, birth, existence, and death of man. Some other related ideas are added to this, such as the idea of creator, idea of soul, supernatural powers and so on. Such religious beliefs together with rites and rituals are the important elements of every culture.
- **Ideals and Morals:** Each and every human being has his standard of morality according to the culture he belongs to. This sense of morality gives him the understanding of right and wrong. Ideals and morality regulate human behaviours in the society.
- **Law:** Every culture forms and imposes specific laws and orders for leading and controlling the social life.
- **Custom:** In each culture, there are certain customs, values and traditions. People of different cultures live according to their own cultural customs and traditions.
- **Capabilities and Skills:** Human beings are distinct from other animals for their special abilities and skills. For example, the ability of using language is one of the unique qualities of man. Again, all members of a culture have certain skills, such as, skill for hunting and conservation of plants, cultivation, or construction of dwelling places etc.
- **Social System:** Men are social animals. So we live and survive through forming society. Humans are dependent on their surrounding environment and natural resources for survival. People acquire food items from nature. Materials for building houses also come from nature. And, the raw materials for dresses are also harvested from natural sources. Culture teaches us how to acquire necessary raw materials and other useful items from nature. For example, the Inuit people learn to build houses with snow. Then again, the food grains and vegetables collected from nature are made edible by cooking. We learn various processes of cooking from culture as well as how to produce food grains and vegetables. We also learn the cultivation methods from culture. Even though people everywhere practice cultivation but the processes of cultivation may

be different due to cultural differences. For instance the process of cultivation in the plain land is different from that in the hills and a Marma farmer is different from Bengali farmer. Therefore, cultures establish relationship between human beings and nature.

### Exercise

**Task-1:** Make a list of the elements of culture?

**Task-2:** How does culture help us to adapt to environment?

### LESSON- 03: ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Culture is everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society. All cultures are comprised of material objects, ideas, values, attitudes and ways of behaving. Among these cultural elements some are easily noticeable to us, while many other remain invisible. For example, we can see the man made houses but the knowledge and skills required for building houses are invisible. Considering this aspect of culture, elements of culture can be divided into two groups: (1) Visible elements and (2) Invisible elements. The following table explains these two types with some examples:

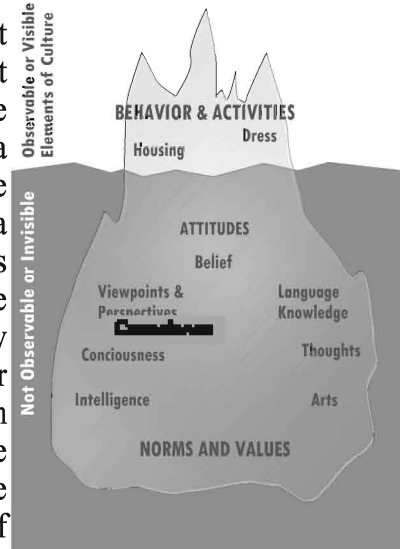
Visible Elements of Culture	Invisible Elements of Culture
Different buildings e.g. school, college, mosque, madrasa, temple, church. office, court etc.	The sum total of our knowledge is our culture which we cannot see.
Different Furniture, such as: chairs, tables, Closet, beds, almirah etc.	Although our attitude and outlook are not visible, these influence and regulate our behaviour and activities.
Various types of clothing like shirt, pant <i>lungi, panjabi, sarees</i> , shoes, etc.	Religious belief and sense of morality.
Vehicles, such as buses, cars, trucks, trains, planes etc.	Language, phoneme, and grammar.
Food items and drinks like chapati Sherbat Coca-Cola, Pepsi, biscuit, chocolate etc.	Fine arts, literature, and inner meaning of music.
Different equipments and technologies of cultivation such as fertilizer, insecticide, tractor, irrigation machines, plough, yoke, ladder etc.	Thoughts and consciousness, intelligence merit and genius.

Books and other publications such as textbooks, literature, newspapers Periodicals, journals etc.	Morals and values.
In the same way, culture has many more visible elements.	Different branches of knowledge and science are also invisible elements of our culture.

Human beings produce the visible elements of culture in order to satisfy their own needs. In many cases, these visible and material articles remain for hundreds of years old. For instance, we see various objects in a museum which are of hundreds of years old. Seeing them, we may get an idea about the people and their culture living at that time.

The invisible elements of culture, such as, thoughts and perception, attitude, values and worldviews can be understood through the visible elements of culture. So culture means material innovations on the one side, and on the other, thought and intelligence, skill or knowledge which are active behind those creations. These elements of culture are not separate from each other.

Let us understand the relationship among different components of culture with an example. We all must have heard of the ices floating on the sea. These are called icebergs. These icebergs are found in the sea nearby the North and South Poles. Interestingly, we can see only one-tenth of the iceberg above the sea water. The rest part of the iceberg remains beneath the water level. For that reason, seeing the icebergs above the sea, it is difficult to understand how large the icebergs really are and how deep they go under the surface of the sea. Our cultures can be compared with these floating icebergs. Like the visible part of the iceberg, cultures have a number of observable elements. Similarly most of the invisible elements of culture remain beyond our sight like



**Fig. 1.3: The Iceberg of culture.**

the unseen parts of the iceberg. In fact, these invisible components of culture regulate our life. Therefore, culture-consisting of both visible and invisible components can be compared with the iceberg. The iceberg of culture and its components are shown in the picture.

**Exercise**

**Task-1 :** Give five examples of visible elements of culture.

**Task-2 :** Give five examples of invisible elements of culture.

---

## LESSON- 04: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

Each and every culture is unique and distinct from the other. Yet we can see some common features among different cultures. We can have a clear understanding of culture only by becoming aware of all its features. Some general characteristics of culture are discussed here-

**1. Culture is Learned:** Man is not born with a culture. Rather, he or she gradually learns culture after birth. The earliest cultural lesson of a child begins from his or her mother. Thereafter, he or she learns about culture from his or her surroundings. Gradually the child learns to speak in his or her mother tongue. By imitating and following the family members, the child becomes familiar with his or her ancestor's culture. This learning continues successively through the child's contact with his or her relatives, neighbours, school, college and other members of the society.

**2. Culture is Shared:** A culture is shared by all its members. A human being alone can not acquire culture. Culture develops and becomes meaningful through exchange and interactions among the members of the culture. For example, everyone of Bangali culture has the knowledge of Bangla language. With some exception a foreigner cannot understand or even read Bangla. And even in our country, different ethnic groups have their individual languages. Members of one ethnic minority often cannot understand or speak the language of another ethnic group. For example, a Bangali cannot understand or speak in *Santali* language.

**3. Culture is Transmitted :** Components of culture, mainly language, behaviour, belief, religion etc are transmitted from one generation to another through interactions. Parents teach their children various elements of culture and the children in turn teach their children. Thus culture is transmitted through generations

**4. Culture is Integrated :** Cultural components are interrelated and dependent on each other. For example, cultural elements like music, fine arts, language, literature, belief, customs, and practices etc cannot be separated from one another. Each and every element plays a very important role in making the culture meaningful. Change in anyone of the element influences others. So culture of a community develops with all the elements together.

**5. Culture Changes with Time :** Culture gradually changes through mutual interactions, new inventions and migrations. For instance, culture changes with the new discoveries and inventions of science. Television, computer, cell phone etc. have brought about significant changes in our lifestyle.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Identify the general characteristics of culture?

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**Task-2 :** 'Human being alone cannot acquire culture' - explain.

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### LESSON- 05: IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING CULTURE

Culture is our life and identity. Like the enormous diversities in nature, we find infinite variations in culture as well. In the greater sense, this diversity of culture makes our life and the earth colourful and interesting.

Our sense, intelligence, conscience, prudence, perception -everything develops through culture. So studying culture is essential to know ourselves. Along with knowing our own culture, we must know other cultures too. This study of others helps us know ourselves better, and also we can build new relations and friendship with others by reducing cultural distance. Thus all of us can work together for the development and welfare of the humanity by removing misunderstandings, suspicion, conflict, enmity, false fear and ignorance of other cultures. Peace and harmony can be established by understanding each other's culture. The importance of studying cultures is mentioned below:

- We can see, know, and understand our own culture better from the perspective of other cultures as we see our reflexion on the mirror. Thus, by knowing the past and present of our own culture, we can better contribute to our future development
- We can enrich our own culture by learning from other cultures. Studying culture is necessary to realize the creativity and diversity of human behaviour. Experience, knowledge and discoveries of one culture can be applied for the welfare and development of people of other cultures.
- By studying the culture of minority ethnic groups we can introduce them to the people of the world. We can make other people aware of their problems and potentials.

- For the development of poor and developing countries, a clear understanding of their culture is essential. Proper knowledge of the culture of a society help in determining the proper ways and strategies for their development.
- At present, people of various countries and cultures are becoming closer. Studying culture is important in this regard so that they can adapt with each other and may live in harmony.
- In the same way, cultural components of different regions are being diffused quite rapidly all over the world. Many changes are taking place as a result of interactions among different cultures. Cultural study is significant for understanding these changes.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Why do we need to know other cultures besides our own culture?

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**Task-2 :** Why is cultural study important?

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## LESSON- 06: OUR VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS OF STUDYING CULTURE

Cultural diversity is the most precious historical asset of human civilization. The present-day human civilization has developed through the assimilation, mutual learning and interaction of different cultures. Knowledge and experience of one culture spread rapidly to other parts of the world. For example, use of iron began in Turkey (Anatolia) and then it spread all over the world. As a result of such interactions, cultures became enriched and mankind has been benefited. A man cannot survive alone without others' support and cooperation. In the same way, a culture cannot develop only on its own. For that reason, integrated efforts of people of all cultures are essential for the overall development of a country. A good social environment develops only on the basis of respectful relationships and harmony among people of different cultures.

Each and every culture is a unique source of acquiring knowledge. Therefore, all cultures are of equal value as reservoir of knowledge. There is nothing like 'superior culture' or 'inferior culture'. For an example, there are around two thousand Khumi people and more than 140 million Bangali in our country. Although the number of Khumi people is very small in comparison with Bangali. But in cultural terms, Khumi and Bangali are of equal dignity, value and status. Both the cultures have unique and independent languages, music, fine arts, belief, traditions, norms customs etc. So we all should be respectful and cordial to others as well as the cultures around us.

Very often we try to judge other cultures in the light of our own, or, we weigh the activities of other culture from our own cultural values and attitudes. Our sense of values and attitudes develop through upbringing in our own culture since our childhood. But we need to understand that this sense of values and attitudes developed in relation to elements of our culture. So we should not judge other cultures from the perspective of our own. As each culture is unique and independent in its own characteristics, We should have sufficient knowledge of values and attitudes of that culture to understand any cultural behaviour properly. Anthropologists suggest that we are to understand each and every culture individually considering all aspects of that culture. We cannot understand one culture with the values of other culture.

Have you ever heard of blackening teeth for beautification? If you belong to the Mru ethnic group, only then you would be able to appreciate how beautiful the black teeth are. That means among the Mru people of the Chittagong Hill tracts, black-coloured teeth are considered beautiful teeth. The Mru boys and girls blacken their teeth with the juice of raw bamboos. To a Mru, the blacker the teeth, the more beautiful that person is considered. Not only that the unmarried Mru boys wear different cosmetics. The boys decorate themselves by colouring lips and making hair ban. In Mru culture, all these are considered to be the beauty of a boy. So it is very difficult to evaluate the beauty of a Mru boy by an outsider. To understand this beauty, first we need to understand what beauty means in Mru culture

On the other hand, we see that only the males in the Santal culture and the females in the Mandi (Garos) inherit property. According to the customs of the Mandi (Garos), After marriage grooms leave their parental house and start living with the bride's family.

That is why, in the Mandi (Garo) society, only the girls inherit property from their mothers. In addition to that, as parents in the old age reside with their youngest daughter, the youngest daughter inherits her mother's dwelling house and land. On the other hand, females do not have any ownership of property in Santal culture.

So the Santal and the Mandi (Garo) cultures control the ownership of properties in two different methods. Even if there are differences in these two methods with that of our own culture, in terms of significance and position, all are equal and important. None is superior to



**Fig. 1.4: A Mru boy of Bandarban.**



others. We should keep in mind that any cultural tradition or custom is appropriate, effective and good for that particular cultural group.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 : why should we respect the other culture?**

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## EXERCISE

### Multiple Choice Questions:

#### 1. Which discipline is called Human science?

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. Sociology    | b. Psychology |
| c. Anthropology | d. Zoology    |

#### 2. What is the first lesson of culture?

- |                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| a. Mother tongue | b. Music   |
| c. Religion      | d. Custom. |

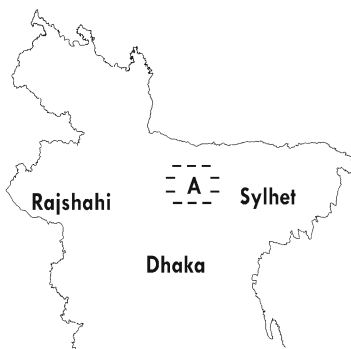
#### 3. Mother tongue of a man:

- i. Determines the lifestyle,
- ii. Facilitates the exchange of ideas and thoughts,
- iii. Contains cultural knowledge and experience.

#### Which one of the following is correct?

- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| a. i and ii   | b. i and ii,     |
| c. ii and iii | d. i, ii and iii |

**Answer question number 4 and 5 from the picture-**



**4. Which ethnic minority live in the "A" indicated place?**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| a. Mru   | b. Kheng |
| c. Mandi | d. Khumi |

**5. The cultural characteristics of the minority ethnic groups indicated in the map are :**

- i. The female members inherit mother's property
- ii. The male members go to bride's house after marriage;
- iii. The boys colour their lips.

Which one of the following is correct?

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| a. i and ii      | b. i and iii      |
| b. c. ii and iii | d. i, ii and iii. |

**Creative Questions:**

1. Rita was very delighted to meet the members of the Mru and Marma ethnic minority while she was travelling in Bandarban. She said to her father, 'although we live in the same country, there is a great difference between us and them. Their food habits, dresses, rites and behaviour are diverse'. Mr. Amzad, Rita's father, said that this cultural diversity makes this earth colourful and interesting.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. What does anthropology deal with?   | 1 |
| b. Give an introduction to the Baffin island.  | 2 |
| c. On a map of Bangladesh, identify the location of the minority ethnic group 3 that Rita met. | 3 |
| d. Justify the remark of Rita's father.  | 4 |

## 2. Table:

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
Language	School
Ideal	Chair
Knowledge	Car

- a. Where is the Jointia hill? 1
- b. “Culture is transmitted”- describe the statement. 2
- c. Which elements of culture are represented by section -'A' ? Explain. 3
- d. “The elements in the section-'B' enrich a culture”- do you support the statement? Give your opinion. 4

## CHAPTER- TWO

# MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is rich in diversity of cultural variations. Although Bangladesh appears to be mainly inhabited by the Bangali people, peoples of different ethnic groups languages, religions and cultures live in this Country. Cultural diversity is indispensable for mankind just like biodiversity is essential for nature. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all of us to preserve their living places and practise the cultural diversities. In this chapter, we will get an overview of the cultural background of different ethnic groups of Bangladesh.



**Fig. 2.1: Members of different minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh.**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES –

On completion of this chapter, we would be able to:

- Present a brief introduction of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh;
- Identify the regional locations of different minority ethnic groups;
- Prepare a table of locations of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh;
- Describe cultural aspects of the minority ethnic groups indicated in the map of Bangladesh.

- Identify the locations of minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh by drawing a map.

### LESSON- 01: ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF ETHNIC GROUP

In this chapter, we will be introduced to the living places and the cultural diversity of different ethnic groups of Bangladesh. Before that, we should have a general idea about the concept of 'ethnic group'. First of all, we should know what ethnic group means 'Ethnos' - means nation, and by 'group' we mean 'social group or cluster'. So, different types of human groups or social clusters are called ethnic groups. Each and every human being on earth is a member of some ethnic group.

Each ethnic group is different from the other. All ethnic groups maintain differences among themselves. So in order to identify an ethnic group, we must know the ways of attaining membership of an ethnic group and maintaining the boundaries with others. Membership of an ethnic group is acquired through maintaining some specific social rules. Observing the social processes we become clear about various ethnic groups. Let us take some examples to understand the issue. The Chakma, the Marma, the Santal, the Mandi and the Bangali are different ethnic groups. Can a Bangali become a Chakma or a Mandi if he wishes to be? Or, can a Chakma man attain the membership of Santal ethnic group at his will? It is not possible for someone to get the membership of any ethnic group just as he or she wishes, isn't it? Because, in most cases, our ethnic identities and memberships are determined by birth. Therefore, the Chakma, the Marma, the Santal, the Mandi or the Bangali- all ethnic groups maintain their distinct social identities and boundaries through determining their membership. In general, all of us are, by birth, members of some ethnic group and have distinct ethnic identity from the members of other ethnic groups.

As a member of an ethnic group, we become familiar with various elements of a particular culture. We have learnt about cultural components and their characteristics in the first chapter. Since our childhood, we become acquainted with visible and invisible elements of our own culture. Usually, cultural interactions might take place between two ethnic groups. Although there might exist some resemblances or similarities among different ethnic groups, identities of their members always remain unique. Ethnic groups maintain their unique identity through retaining the social boundaries. Cultural identity and uniqueness of the ethnic groups develops on the basis of some general characteristics, such as:

**1) Social recognition of ethnic identity and group membership:** An ethnic group confers or attributes a certain identity on its members. Every human being grows up with the identity of his ethnic group since his or her childhood. Let us take an example of Namita Khisa who grew up with Chakma identity since

her childhood. As her self-identity, she asserts herself to be a member of the Chakma community on the other hand, members of other ethnic groups like the Bangali, the Santal, the Mandi or the Marma also recognize her as Chakma. The fact is that the Chakma or any other ethnic group and its members have a wider social recognition.

**2) Consciousness and sense of belonging to the ethnic group:** In general, members of a group are conscious and aware of their ethnic identity. This means that perceptions of self and ethnic identity exist among all members of any group. Therefore, we find different people proudly affirming that ‘we are Bangali’, ‘we are Mandi’, ‘we are Santal’, or ‘we are Marma’ etc. For this sense of consciousness ethnic groups are called nations.

**3) A common field of social *activities* and interactions:** Members of the same ethnic group have adequate resemblance or similarity in their lifestyle or cultural activities. Usually they speak and exchange their thoughts in the same language. Their livelihood strategies and cultural values and ideals are almost similar. All the members of an ethnic community know about different visible and invisible elements of their culture and practice them accordingly. On the other hand, the differences in cultural components create distinctions among the members of different ethnic groups.

On the basis of these general characteristics, we can identify different ethnic groups. It is also important to note that ‘ethnic groups’, ‘language groups’, ‘religious groups’ or ‘religious community’, ‘groups of professionals’ and ‘human race’ are not the same. We will learn about such different categories of social groupings in higher classes. So far, no anthropological survey has been conducted on the inhabitants of Bangladesh. That is why, it is not possible to know exactly how many ethnic groups are there in Bangladesh. Approximately there are more than 45 ethnic groups in Bangladesh. It is inferred that this number will increase, if a proper anthropological survey is conducted.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** What is an ethnic group?

**Task-2 :** Identify the general factors through which ethnic minority groups can be separated.

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## LESSON- 02: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN BANGLADESH

In a multi ethnic country, the ethnic groups having a relatively small size of population are called ethnic minorities. Apparently, Bangladesh seems to be a Bangali-inhabited country. In reality, there are many other ethnic groups in Bangladesh who have different languages, religions, and cultures. Bangladesh

is a country of enormous cultural and ethnic diversity. If population size is considered, the Bangali ethnic group is the majority in this country. On the other hand, other ethnic groups of the country may be called “minority ethnic groups” or “ethnic minorities”—comparing their population size with that of the Bangali ethnic group. At the same time, it must be remembered that irrespective of the population size, each ethnic community is an independent and unique social group of equal dignity and value.

In Bangladesh, the terms like ‘ethnic minorities’ or ‘minority ethnic groups’ usually refers to the social groups who maintain and represent their traditional social systems. These ethnic groups have been retaining their own culture and traditions to a larger extent amongst various social and historical changes. They sustained their old traditions and cultural uniqueness in this way. This means that they did not totally blend with the technological and cultural changes that took place at national and international levels. Rather, to a larger extent, they maintained the uniqueness of different elements of their society and culture. The cultural characteristics of the ethnic minorities can be understood on the basis of some characteristics, such as:

- 1) Ascription of self-identity and, the sense of belonging and consciousness among the members of an ethnic group.
- 2) Minority ethnic groups are tradition-bound societies. They retain their past traditions and heritage, especially, the cultural traditions of the pre-colonial periods.
- 3) Distinctive social, economic or political system.
- 4) Distinct language, values, beliefs and morals.
- 5) Intense and profound relationship with their surrounding natural environment.
- 6) Minority ethnic groups are relatively in a weaker position in the modern state system as their societies are based on ancient traditions.

Recently, for the preservation and development of cultural traditions of these ethnic groups, the Parliament of Bangladesh has framed a law known as ‘Ethnic Minority Cultural Institutions Act 2010’ in April 2010. The law defines the non-Bangali and the traditional ethnic groups living in Bangladesh as the ‘minority ethnic groups’.

There are about 35 to 40 million people of such minority ethnic groups living in 90 countries of the globe including Bangladesh. In different countries, they are known by different names, such as: ‘*Indigenous People*’, ‘*Aborigines*’, ‘*Tribes*’, ‘*Schedule Tribe*’, ‘*Ethnic Minority*’, ‘*First Nation*’ etc. The United Nations—UN has named these traditional groups as ‘Indigenous People’. Special rights of the ‘Indigenous People’ have been recognized in the ‘UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People 2007’.

The dictionary meaning of the '*Indigenous People*' is 'original inhabitants'. The term 'Indigenous People' originates from the notion of the first inhabitants of Australia and America. Human settlements began in Australia and America about 45 and 16 thousand years ago respectively. These early people are the first and indigenous inhabitants of these two continents. For thousands of years, people of any other ethnic community from other continents did not step into the geographical boundaries of these two continents. History of the White settlers in Australia and America is not very old. You must have read that Columbus discovered America in 1492 AD. By 'discovery, it is meant that Columbus along with his companions, first stepped into America from Europe in 1492 AD. Human settlements had existed even thousands of years before his arrival from Europe. Prior to the arrival of the Whites under the leadership of Columbus, there were people who had resided there for about fifteen and half thousand years. They were the local and original inhabitants of America. Although the Whites are presently the majority, they are actually the immigrants and settlers. So, the difference between the indigenous people and the settlers according to the concept of the UN, can easily be identified in these two continents. But in the case of Bangladesh, identifying such differences from the history of settlement is not that simple.

Many ethnic groups have been residing side by side for thousands of years within the geographical boundary of the present-day Bangladesh. Historically, the traditional ethnic communities are the inhabitants of the hills and high lands. Even some hundred years ago ethnic people from one territory did not enter into others'. Population was quite scarce at that time. In recent years, due to various political and economic reasons and also for population growth, the periphery and boundary of the ethnic minorities' settlement is reducing day by day. Not only that, they are also being subject to different forms of deprivations and discriminations. For this reason, in order to protect the rights and preserve the cultural traditions of the ethnic minorities, the Government of Bangladesh has endorsed a number of laws and acts.

Many members of the traditional ethnic societies took part and fought heroically in the Liberation war of Bangladesh. They also made significant contributions to the independence of Bangladesh through their great sacrifices. Besides, from the anti-British movements to different national demands and the struggle for the establishment of democracy, involvement of the members of traditional minority ethnic groups has always been noteworthy. Their contribution to the economic prosperity of the country is also appreciable. Being employed in different Government and non-government services, members of the minority ethnic groups have been making substantial



contribution to the progress of the country. In the following sections of the chapter, detailed accounts of the minority ethnic groups of different regions of the country have been discussed.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Explain why Bangladesh is a country of diversity?

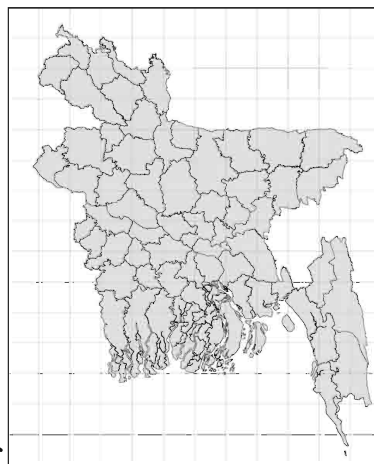
**Task-2 :** List the names of the Bangladeshi minority ethnic groups.

### LESSON- 03: CULTURAL MAP OF BANGLADESH

A number of ethnic groups are found to live next to each other in almost every part of Bangladesh. By indicating the locality of all minority ethnic groups in the map of Bangladesh, we can visualize this diversity. Thus we can draw a cultural map of Bangladesh. We can also present related information about these ethnic groups in the map. This kind of cultural mapping is of much significance in preserving cultural traditions of Bangladesh.

A direct correlation between geographical locations of many places and cultural information can be established in the cultural map of the country. This map can help us identify not only different ethnic groups and their locations, but also other information like who are neighbours to whom and who are culturally a little distant from other etc. Simultaneously, we can compare cultural features of ethnic communities of different regions of Bangladesh. As a result, on one side, we can identify different regions and places with this cultural map; on the other, we can also know about the people and their culture.

A number of ethnic groups including the Santal, Oraon, Mahali, Rajoar, Garat, Turi, Rajbangshi, Munda and many others live in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Joypurhat, Naogaon, and Rajshahi districts of the north and north-eastern regions of Bangladesh. In Khulna division, along with the Munda people, the Buno and Baghdi ethnic groups are found to reside. Different ethnic groups, such as the Mru, Kheng, Lushai, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Khumi, Tangchangya, Chak, Pangkho, Bawm have been dwelling in Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of the southeastern Bangladesh. The habitation of the Mandi or Garo people is scattered over many places of Bangladesh. However, to be specific,



**Map:** A sample map of Bangladesh for preparing cultural map.

the Mandi or Garos live mainly in Mymensingh, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Tangail and Gazipur districts. Some other ethnic groups living in

Mymensingh, Netrokona, and Sherpur are the Hajong, Koch, Dalu, and the Rajbangshi. The Khasi ethnic community resides mostly in the Jointia hills of Sylhet districts in the northeast Bangladesh. The Bishnupriya Manipuri, Meitei Manipuri, and Pangan Manipuri are the dominant ethnic groups in Sylhet, Habiganj and Sunamganj districts. The Rakhain ethnic group resides in coastal districts of Patuakhali, Barguna and Cox's Bazaar.

You yourself can prepare a map of cultural diversity by presenting accurate cultural description of different regions in the map of Bangladesh. To be exact, after identifying the boundary of an Upazila or a district, you can show the ethnic group(s) residing there. To indicate the presence of different ethnic groups you can use different signs, colours or icons. By following this method, starting from an Upazila, you can draw the district and divisions and thereby the entire Bangladesh showing the cultural diversity. After decorating the map with different colours for the presence and location of different ethnic groups, you will get a vivid and colourful Bangladesh. You can realize in terms of cultural diversity how colourful and rich our country is! Not only in the map, but cultural diversity brings the touch of colour in our life, too. We can enrich ourselves through interactions with members of different cultures. On the basis of unity and amity among all the cultures, we can build a more colourful and beautiful Bangladesh in future.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** What is a cultural map? What is the importance of a cultural map?

**Task-2 :** Draw a cultural map of Bangladesh.

## LESSON- 04 : MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN DHAKA DIVISION

A number of minority ethnic groups reside in almost all the districts of Dhaka Division. However, a large part of them reside in Sherpur, Jamalpur, Netrokona, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Tangail, Rajbari, Faridpur and Dhaka districts. The minority ethnic groups residing in Dhaka Division are the Mandi (Garo), Hajong, Koch, Rajbangshi, Dalu, Ho, Mahato, Munda, Oraon and others. In addition to this, people of other ethnic minorities live in different districts of Dhaka Division for the purpose of job and study. Ethnic minority population in this division is about three hundred thousand. Here Mandi ethnic group is briefly described

**Mandi Ethnic Group :** The Mandi people are more commonly known as the Garos. But people of this ethnic group are more comfortable to describe themselves as the Mandi. They speak in their own language '*Achik Kusik*',

meaning the ‘Language of the Hills’. The Mandi have many groups, clans and sub-clans. In Mandi language, the lineage is called ‘*chachchi*’ and the clan is called ‘*mahari*’. The Mandi society is matriarchal, i.e. the mother is the head of the family. The children inherit the surname of the mother. The clan or the *mahari* identity of the Mandi people is determined by the clan of the mother. The name of the language of garo living on flatland is *lamdani*.

The Mandi society is mostly agrobased. They used to do *jhum* (shifting agriculture) cultivation in the past. At present, many educated people of the community are being engaged in different occupations including government and non-government jobs, trade and commerce etc. Their major social festivals are mainly cultivation-oriented.

Therefore, ‘*Wangala*’– harvest festival, is their greatest festival.

The original religion of the Mandi is ‘*Sangsharek*’ and their chief god is ‘*Tatara Rabuga*’. But as majority of the Mandi people had converted to Christianity in recent years, Christian rites and rituals have become their main religious activities.



Fig. 2.3: Garo couple in their traditional dress.

Traditional dress of the Mandi woman is known as ‘*Dakmanda*’ and ‘*Dakshari*’.

‘*Gando*’ is the traditional dress for the males. Mandi have some traditional popular foods. ‘*Khari*’ –a preparation of chicken is such a popular food. In the past, long drawn with sloping roofs house was very common among the Mandi people. Such houses are called ‘*Nok*’ in Mandi language.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Make a list of the minority ethnic groups residing in Dhaka Division.

**Task-2 :** Describe the location and some characteristics of socio- cultural life of the Mandi ethnic group.

## LESSON- 05: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN CHITTAGONG DIVISION

There are 14 minority ethnic groups living mainly in the districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts, i.e. in Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban and also in other districts of Chittagong Division. The ethnic groups living here are: the Kheng, Khumi, Chak, Chakma, Tangchngya, Gurkha, Tripura, Pangkho,

Bawm, Marma, Mru, Banagogi Lushai and Asomia. Majority of Rakhain, another ethnic group, reside in Cox's Bazaar. The Rakhain also live in Barguna, Barisal and Patuakhali districts. Settlement of the Tripura community is extended to other places as well. Other than the Chittagong Hill Tracts, they have their locations in Comilla, Chittagong, Chandpur, Faridpur, Sylhet and Maulavibazar. In addition, other ethnic groups like the Gurkha, Baori are found to live in the plains of Chittagong Division although they contain a very small population size. The population of the minority ethnic groups living in the Chittagong Division is about 1.5 million. Here we will have a brief introduction of the Chakma ethnic group.

**The Chakma Ethnic Group:** Considering the population size, the Chakma is the largest ethnic group in Bangladesh. They have their locations in Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari, and Cox's Bazaar. Many of the Chakma people live in different states of India including Mizoram, Tripura, Assam and Arunachal province, West Bengal and Delhi.

The Chakma circle, mainly consisting of the Rangamati district including some parts of Khagrachari, is headed by the Chakma Chief or the Chakma king. The Chakma circle, too, like other two circles of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) consists of many Mouzas, while there are some villages in each Mouza. In Chakma language, a village is called *adam* or *para*. The village chief is known as the *Karbari*. Under the leadership of the Mouza chief who is called the *Headman*, different activities including collection of *khajna* or tax from the Mouza inhabitants at the government rates, development works for the Mouza, settlement of social disputes and welfare activities for local people are organized. The Chakma king, having consultation with the Mouza chief, appoints the village chief or the *Karbari*. Generally the concerned Deputy Commissioner, as per recommendation of the King, appoints the Mouza *Headman*.

Conventionally, the Chakma king is the chief of the Chakma community and he is the symbol of social unity and solidarity. The king performs the task of the social adjudication of the ethnic groups in his circle according to the customary laws. He also plays the role of an advisor to the Government of Bangladesh on the Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. Barrister Debashish Roy is the present king of the Chakma circle. He is the 51<sup>st</sup> king of the Chakma dynasty.

From the narratives of the Chakma minstrel composer *Genghulis*, it is known that the Chakma lived in the Champaknagar state in the distant past. The Chakma prince Bijoygiri had an expedition with 26 thousand soldiers and gradually occupied Chittagong, Arakan, the Kuki state (Lushai) etc. Instead of returning to Champaknagar, he started to live in the newly conquered state. It is assumed that the prince Bijoygiri's conquest took place in about 590 AD. Many of the present-

day Chakma people consider themselves as the descendents of those 26 thousand soldiers who conquered Arakan and Chittagong. However, the Chakma take much pride in claiming themselves as the descendants of the *Shakya* lineage as because Goutam Buddha, the preacher of Buddhism was born in the Shakya dynasty. Some researchers argue that the word 'Chakma' has derived from the word *Shakya*

The Chakma society is patriarchal and mostly live on agriculture. They are equally skilled in *jhum* (shifting agriculture) and flatland cultivations. The Chakma are Buddhists. There is a Buddhist temple in almost every single Chakma village. They worship Lord Buddha during the full moon and other occasions including the *Boishakhi Purnima* by offering flowers, food and other items, and kindling lanterns. *Banabhante* (Shrimoth *Sadhanananda Mahasthavira*), a devotee endowed with wisdom (*Bodhi*), is the most respectful religious figure to the Buddhist community. During the *Buddha Purnima*, *Kathin Cheebardan* and other *Purnima* (full moon) occasions, the devotees, followers and other pious people gather in the congregation of thousands in the Buddhists temple at the Chakma Raj Banabihar in Rangamati that was established by *Banabhante*.



**Fig.2.4: The traditional dress of the Chakma.**

Although traditionally they are under the jurisdiction of the Chakma king, the Chakma are now moving ahead through different political changes and experience. After the political conflicts in the "Chittagong Hill Tracts that lasted for two decades, the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh Government and the Parbatya Chattagram Janasnghati Samity signed the '*Parbatya Chattagram Chukti*' (the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord) on December 2, 1997. Consequently, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council" was formed to oversee the general administration and development activities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Due to the special historical and socio-cultural uniqueness of this region, all the ethnic groups of Chittagong Hill Tracts are under the integrated administration of the government administration, the kings of the three regional circle and the Regional Council. In addition to the traditional leadership, the influences of local and regional leaders are no less important in the Chakma society.

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**Exercise**

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**Task-1 :** Make a list of the minority ethnic groups living in Chittagong Division.

**Task-2 :** Describe the different localities of the Chakma ethnic group and some characteristics of their socio-cultural life.

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**LESSON- 06: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN SYLHET DIVISION**

There are 4 districts in Sylhet Division which are- Sunamganj, Sylhet, Maulavibazar and Habiganj. Along with the Bangali, a number of minority ethnic groups reside in Sylhet Division including the Kharia, Mandi, Oraon, Tripur, Hajong, Khasi, Bishnupriya, Meitei, Pangan, Baghdi, Banai, Bin, Bhumij, Gond, Gonju, Gurkha, Halam, Musahar, Mahato, Naik, Nunia, Panikha, Patra, Shabar, Koch, Dalu, Santal, Munda, Ho, Malo, Mikir, Mahali, Khanda and other. Bishnupriya Manipuri, Meitei Manipuri and Khasi ethnic groups are larger in population size comparing with Bangali population. Total population of the minority ethnic groups living in Sylhet Division is about three hundred thousand and a majority of them work in the tea gardens. A short discussion on the Manipuri ethnic communities is presented here.

**Manipuri Ethnic Groups:** The Manipuri ethnic groups reside in Maulavibazar, Habiganj, Sylhet and Sunamganj districts of Sylhet Division. In the early nineteenth century (1819-1826), when the Burmese soldiers attacked the Assam state of India, some ethnic people of that place migrated to Sylhet and settled there. They are known as Manipuri in Bangladesh as they mainly came from Manipur state of India. Although all of them are commonly known as the Manipuri, in reality there are three separate and individual ethnic groups under this same ethnic name. These three groups of ethnic minorities who are known as the Manipuris are: 1) the Meitei Manipuri, 2) the Bishnupriya Manipuri and 3) the Pangan Manipuri. A brief introduction of these three groups is presented below.

**Meitei Manipuri:** In Bangladesh, the highest number of the Meitei people lives in Moulvibazar district of Sylhet Division. However, the majority of the Meitei resides in the Manipur state of India. In addition to these locations, they also have location in Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya states of India, Yunnan Province of China and also in Myanmar. Predominantly, the Meitei people of Bangladesh are living in villages and dependent on agriculture. Their traditional dance, art, textile etc. have drawn attention and gained international reputation.



**Fig- 2.5: Manipuri Traditional Dance**

Mother tongue of the Meitei is '*Meiteilone*', which is a member of Kuki-Chin language family of the Tibeto-Burmese language group. The traditional religion of the Meitei is *Apokpa*. The main gods and goddesses are '*Sanamahi*', '*Pakhangba*', '*Apokpa*' and '*Sidaba*'. They have their own traditional medical and health care system that developed from the ancient period. These traditional medical practitioners are known as '*Maiba*' or '*Maibi*'.

**Bishnupriya Manipuri:** Majority of the Bishnupriya community have been residing in Maulavibazar district. Their original residence had been in the Manipur state of India. Some Bishnupriya families living in an area of a village known as *Para*. There is a temple and a '*mondop*' (worshipping hall) in each *Para*. All the social and religious activities of the community are performed surrounding the temple and the *mondop*. In every village, there is a Brahmin family who work as priest to accomplish the temple activities and rituals. Each village has the '*Village Panchayat*', while the '*Pargana Panchayat*' consists of a number of villages. In order to carry out the *Panchayat* activities, a wise person among the Brahmins is selected. The *Village Panchayat* and *Pargana Panchayat* are quite significant in Bishnupriya society.

The Bishnupriya are the followers of the Vaishnav tradition. The Rash-Jatra, Rath-Jatra etc are their main festivals. *Raspujima*, one of their biggest festivals, is celebrated in the full moon (*pujima*) during the month of Kartik. Programs like *Goshthaleela*, *Rakhalras* and *Rasleela* are observed on the occasion of *Raspujima*. One of the greatest religious programs is the *Sangkirtan* (praising songs of God). The Bishnupriya language belongs to the Indo-Aryan language group. The Bishnupriya community is divided into five clans. Marriage within the same clan is prohibited.

**Pangan Manipuri:** In the beginning of the seventeenth century (1606AD), a group of Muslim soldiers had an expedition to the Manipur state under the leadership of Mohammad Sani, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pathan administrator Khwaja Osman of Taraf region in Habiganj. A treaty had been signed

with the Manipuri king Khagomba and this army permanently settled down in Manipur. Later on, when the Mughal administrator Mir Jumla was defeated, many of the soldiers took shelter in the neighbouring Manipur state. They established matrimonial relationships with the local people and started preaching Islam. This Muslim population of Manipur is known as the Pangan.

The Pangans speak in *Meiteilone* language, which is included in the Kuki-Chin language family of the Tibeto-Burmese group. They are all Sunni Muslims. Usually, they marry within the same community. At present, most of them dwell in the southern part of Kamalganj Upazila of Maulavibazar district.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Prepare a list of the minority ethnic groups living in Sylhet Division.

## LESSON- 07: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN RAJSHAHI DIVISION

There are altogether eight districts in Rajshahi Division. In each of these districts, the ethnic minority groups have been staying next to the Bangali for many years. In some regions, they are quite dense in population while in some other parts their population is pretty small. The minority ethnic groups living in Rajshahi Division include the Santal, Paharia, Rajbangshi, Oraon, Mahato, Munda, Bhumali, Bhuiya, Bhumij, Kharia, Koda, Malo, Pahan, Rajoar, Turi, Koch, Mushahar, Ho, Mahle, Barman and the Ganda. Total population of the ethnic minority groups of this division is around six hundred thousand. Now we will have a short description of the Oraon community.

**The Oraon Ethnic Group:** The Oraon people have been living in the northern part of Bangladesh for many centuries. At present, they are mostly living in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Bogra, Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Natore, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari districts of north Bengal. There is also a segment of the Oraon living in Habiganj and Maulavibazar districts of Sylhet region. In Sylhet Division, they mainly work as tea-garden labourers and their lifestyle is quite different from the Oraon people of other regions of the country. Even in Gazipur district, there is a small Oraon community. The Oraon population is relatively higher in Naogaon district.

The Oraon people are mainly nature-worshippers. *Dharmesh* is their God or Creator. He is the chief God and lives in the sun. For that reason, the sun is also considered their God. The Oraon people observe different rituals and religious festivals almost throughout the year. Such festivals are *Sarhul*, *Karam*, *Khariani*, and *Fagua*. *Karam* is the greatest festival for them. According to the traditional belief,



**Fig- 2.6: The Oraon Children**



once the community was attacked by the enemy, then they fled to the deep forest and took refuge under the *karam* tree. As this tree saved them from their enemies, in commemoration of the tree, they arrange the *Karam* festival in the *puṛnima* (full moon) during the month of *Bhadra*.

As the Barind tract was once full of forests, hunting was one of the major occupations of the Oraon people. Due to the gradual decrease of land for habitation and agriculture, they are now migrating to the towns and being employed in different professions. Women are being engaged in handicraft centres and non-government organizations.

Two languages are in use among the Oraon. One of the languages is *Kurukh* which belongs to the Dravidian language family. The other is *Sadri*. *Sadri* belongs to the Indo-European language family. Festive activities like folk music, folk drama, dance in different functions, playing drums and other instruments etc occupy a greater part of their life and culture. Entertaining guests with different cakes (*pitha*) is the traditional custom in the Oraon society.

The Oraon ethnic group is witness to and participants in many historical events. They actively participated in the Tebhaga Movement of 1950s, the farmers' movement in Nachol that was led by Ila Mitra. Hundreds of the Oraon youths took part in the freedom fight of Bangladesh. Altogether fifty five clans are found among the Oraon. Marriage within the same clan is prohibited. Their society is patriarchal. The village organization of the Oraon which is called the *Panchesh* is responsible for maintaining peace and discipline in the society. There is a *Sardar* or *Mahatosh* and a *Purohit* or *Naigas* in every village. The *Panchesh* is formed with seven to eight aged members that run for three to five years.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Make a list of the ethnic groups living in the Rajshahi Division.

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**Task-2 :** Give an account of the locations of the Oraon ethnic group.

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## LESSON- 08: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN RANGPUR DIVISION

There are habitations of minority ethnic groups in all eight districts of Rangpur Division. The ethnic minorities residing in these districts are the Santal, Oraon, Malo, Turi, Koch, Kolhe, Paharia, Mahato, Mushahar, Mahali Rajbangshi etc. The population of the minority ethnic groups in this division is about two lac. A brief description of the Santal ethnic group is given below.

**The Santal Ethnic Group:** The Santal ethnic group is the second largest among the minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh. They live in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Nawabganj, Joypurhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari districts of north Bengal. They also constitute the largest population among the minority ethnic groups living in the north Bengal. The Santal call themselves the *Hara*. In 1836, the British Government identified a specific area for the safe living of the Santal which is known as the Santal Pargana in the Bihar state of India. Later on, the moneylenders and businessmen who came from outside the state, started exploiting the Santal. They cunningly trapped the innocent Santal in the web of debts through using different tactics. The Santal, afterward, revolted against the exploitation and oppression. The rebellion of 1855 AD is known as the Santal rebellion in history. In Santal language rebellion is '*hool*'. The leaders of this rebellion were two brothers: Sidhu and Kanhu, whom they revere as their heroes. But, the British government supported the moneylenders and the oppressors, and brutally stifled the rebellion. Ten thousand Santal rebels were killed. Some historians think that many of the Santal migrated to the northern part of present-day Bangladesh and Assam at that time. On the other hand, some other historians argue that the local 'Zamindars' brought them in to cultivate the fallow lands of this region. According to Census report of 2011 about 1,47,112 (One lac forty seven thousand one hundred twelve) Santal live in Bangladesh.

In Santal language, gods are called '*Bonga*'. Their traditional god is the sun. Among the other gods, '*Marangburu*', '*Orangk Bonga*', '*Abge Bonga*', '*Jaher Era*' and '*Gosai Era*' etc are more prominent. The Santal believe that the creator and the soul are ever-living and immortal. They are omnipresent and human welfare depends on their satisfaction. Influence of some Hindu deities can also be observed among the Santal. Another significant characteristic of the Santal is that a Santal male draws odd numbers of tattoos on the left wrist. The women too, draw tattoos on their hands and chests. They believe that if someone dies without tattoo, *Yama*– the Lord of death and after world- would severely punish the deceased. Now-a-days many Santal people are being converted to Christianity. As a result, significant changes are taking place in their culture and lifestyle.

The village *Panchayat* is the core of the Santal society. This *Panchayat* consists of seven important persons to coordinate and operate the *Panchayat* activities.

They are called *Manjhi*, *Jagamanjahi*, *Gadet*, *Paranik*, *Jagaparanik*, *Naike*, and *Kudam Naike* etc. *Janguru* is not a member of the Panchayat, but he is regarded as the religious leader. Everything of the village is conducted under the leadership of *Manjhi* -the village chief.

The language of the Santal belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family. The Santal society is divided into different clans. In Santal language, these clans are called '*Paris*'. Santal society is patriarchal. Social identity of a son is determined through father's family line. Although all of the sons have equal right to father's property,



**Fig- 2.7: A Santal Family**

the daughters do not have any. Majority of the Santal are farmers. The Santal consider women as the symbol of energy. They believe that it was women who first discovered agriculture. In the Santal society, both men and women work in the field. They cultivate paddy, mustard, tobacco, chili, maize, sesame, sugarcane and other crops. They also weave mats and make brooms for their own use and also for the market.

Generally the Santal live in Houses with four bold sloping roofs covered with straws and having the mud walls. Serving and drinking '*haria*' (self-prepared drink) in different social functions including the entertainment of guests is an integral part of their culture. '*Baha*', '*Sohrai*' and '*Arok*' are their most important festivals. The '*lagren*' dance is another unique cultural feature. The '*dang*' dance is arranged during the marriage ceremony of the Santal.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Make a list of the minority ethnic groups living in the Rangpur Division.

**Task-2 :** Give an account of the locality and social, cultural and religious life of the Santal.

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## LESSON- 09: MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN KHULNA AND BARISAL DIVISIONS

The population of minority ethnic group in Barisal and khulna division is about

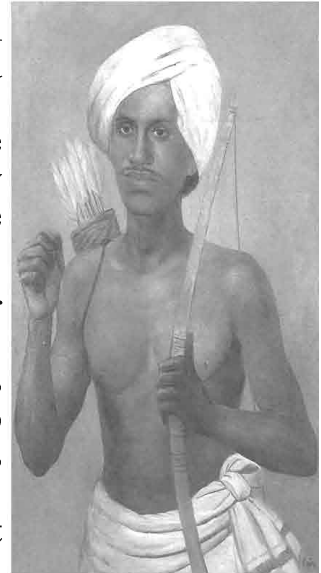
2.5 lacs. Rakhain is the minority ethnic group living in the Barisal Division. They mostly reside in Patuakhali, Barisal and Barguna districts. Besides, a notable number of population of this community can also be found in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban of Chittagong Division. Ethnic groups residing in the Khulna Division are relatively small in population compared with the other parts of the country. The minority ethnic groups living in the different districts of this division are the Munda, Mahato, Baghdi, Rajoar and Rajbangshi. These ethnic minorities are mostly residing in Kushtia, Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts. A short account of the Munda ethnic group is presented here.

**The Munda Ethnic Group:** Munda people live in north Bengal and nearby the Sundarbans of Bangladesh. A good number of the Munda families reside in Jhenaidah district and in the teagarden areas of the greater Sylhet region. They have their dwellings in some villages of Koyra and Dumuria Upazila of Khulna district. In addition, a large portion of the Munda live in Shyamnagar, Debhata and Tala upazilas of Satkhira district. Majority of the Munda are found in Jharkhanda, Bihar, West Bengal, Chattishgar and Orissa of India.

The Munda mainly live on agriculture. The Munda rebellion is a memorable revolt in the history of the anti-British movements. This movement took place under the leadership of Birsa Munda. He dreamt of building an affluent society freeing the country through fighting against the British colonizers and local exploiters. The Munda people regard him as 'God' for his strong ideals. He, along with his followers,

attacked the government offices, police stations, mission houses of the British government in Singbhum, Tamar and Bashiar in the state of Jharkhand. Eventually on 24 December, 1899, he was arrested. He had a mysterious death in the Ranchi jail in 1900 AD. He and his followers bravely fought only with bows-arrows and spears against the mighty British force.

The Munda people are divided into 13 different '*kili*'s or clans. The Munda have their own village chief and king. The village chief controls a clan and the king controls some other clans. They offer solution and guidance to different social and religious disputes. The Munda houses are built of mud. Only the sons inherit father's property. The name of Munda religion is swarna. They believe that '*Sing Bonga*' or 'Sun God' is the source of all power and he is the creator of the earth.



**Fig. 2.8: Birsha Munda.**

Their language is *Mundari*. At present, they have equally accepted the *Sadri* language of Oraon. They have a special characteristic dance and saga

(*kirtan*), which they offer to Lord Krishna and Lord Ram. On religious and social occasions, they draw beautiful pictures, parapets and arts with red and white mud. Similar parapets are found in their houses too.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Make a list of the minority ethnic groups living in the Khulna and Barisal Divisions.

---

**Task-2 :** Describe the location, participation in anti-British movement, social and religious life of the Munda ethnic group.

---

### EXERCISE

#### Multiple choice questions:

**1. In which year did the Santal rebellion take place?**

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| a) 1855 | b) 1857 |
| c) 1859 | d) 1860 |

**2. In which place do the Oraon live in larger population?**

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| a) Bandarban | b) Kaptai |
| c) Naogaon   | d) Sylhet |

**3. Which ethnic minorities are living in the Rajshahi region?**

- a) The Santal, Mahato, Koda, Paharia
- b) The Santal, Paharia, Mru, Chakma,
- c) The Chakma, Marma, Khasia, Paharia
- d) The Khasia, Paharia, Chakma, Hajong

Read the paragraph below and answer questions 4 and 5:

“Usayching Marma grew up as a Marma since her childhood. So he claims himself to be a Marma. The Bangali, Santal, Mandi, and Chakma recognize Usayching as Marma.

**4. Which one is the identity of Usayching:**

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| a) Larger Ethnic group | b) ethnic minority |
| c) Language family     | d) mankind         |

**5. The features of cultural identity manifested here in case of Usayching is–**

- i. social recognition of membership and identity
- ii. general field of exchanging ideas and thoughts
- iii. Consciousness of belonging to a group

Which one is correct below

- a. i
- b. ii
- c. iii
- d. i,ii and iii

**Creative questions:**

1. Antara visited her friend Shushila Dewan's house in Mymensingh. There she observed that the role of mother is prominent, the children have received mother's surname and the clan identity is also determined through the mother. Antara was acquainted with the Marmas of Chittagong Hill Tracts. There were behavioural differences between Shushila Dewan's family and the Marma.
  - a. What is the meaning of the word '*anthropos*'? 1
  - b. 'The minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh are the bearers of traditional culture'- explain. 2
  - c. Explain the identity of Shushila Dewan. 3
  - d. Analyze the differences between Shushila Dewan and the Marma according to your text book. 4

2. Abir and Promila Mardi are chatting in the premise of the Carmichael College:-

**Abir:** The rebellion of your ancestors against exploitation and oppression in the nineteenth century is a memorable historical event.

**Promila:** For this reason, we respectfully remember the sacrifice of those two brothers even today.

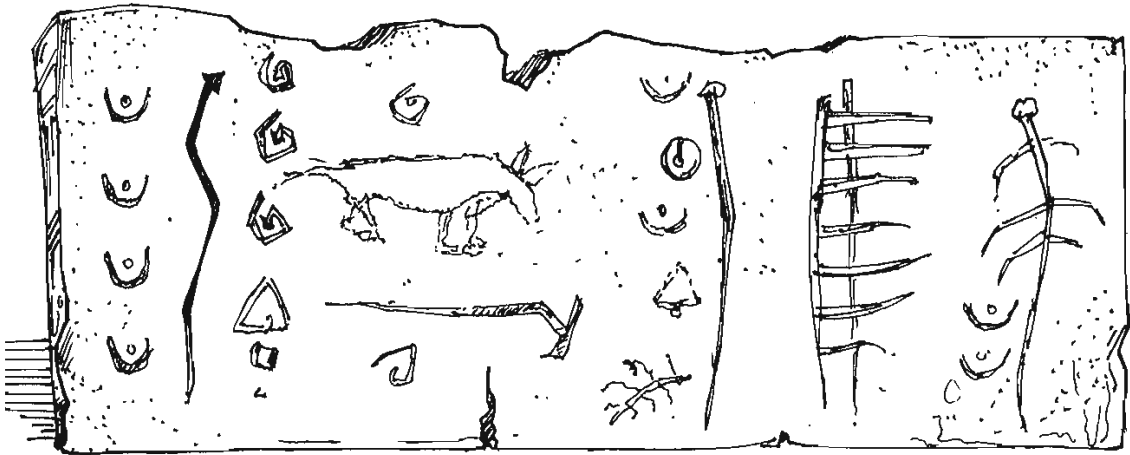
**Abir:** Whatever you say, your history, tradition, social life, and culture- all are full of diversity.

- a. What is a rebellion in Santal language? 1
- b. Describe the identity of Birsa Munda. 2
- c. Which rebellion Abir has referred to? Explain. 3
- d. Analyze the justification of the last remark of Abir. 4

## CHAPTER- THREE

### LANGUAGES OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

Different minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh have their own mother tongues. These languages belong to the main four language families of the world. Analyzing different languages used in this country, it is evident that, despite the specific characteristics of the languages, some languages are very close to each other. Mother tongue is equally dear to all of us. This chapter seeks answers to the questions like how the languages originate, where the languages of the minority ethnic groups came from, which family the languages belong to and what was the form of language long ago.



**Fig. 3.1: The alphabets of ancient times**

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, we would be able to-

- Explain how languages originate, the idea of language and origin;
- Describe the languages of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh and which language family these languages belong to;
- Identify the minority ethnic groups whose languages belong to the Austro- Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language families;
- Make a regional table of the language-families of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh;
- Draw an outline of the language families of the minority ethnic groups in the map of Bangladesh;
- Identify the locations of different minority ethnic groups belonging to different language families in the map of Bangladesh.



## LESSON- 01: LANGUAGES AND LANGUAGE FAMILIES IN BANGLADESH

Language is a unique cultural achievement of human being. Human beings express their feelings through language. But in ancient times, people did not use language as nicely as we do today. They would express their feelings or thoughts by signs or gestures. Languages were eventually formed through arranging the sounds in a meaningful way. languages were not created in a day. They were formed through the changes and development of human civilization for thousands of years.

From the begining of the origin of languages to the present, people of different regions and cultures have been expressing their feelings through numerous languages. Linguists got the idea of 'language families' from this diversity of languages. Among the countless languages, both living and extinct, some similarities were identified among some languages, while some languages are totally different from each other.

It has not been correctly determined yet how many languages are there in the world today. But linguists assume that about six thousand languages are in use in the present world. On the basis of the proximity of some main languages, linguists divided them into some language families. In this way, Bangla, Chakma, English, Hindi, Persian, French, Nepali etc are included in the Indo-European language family. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada languages of southern India belong to the Dravidian language family. In Philippines the, Malaysia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Fizi there exists the branches of Austric languages like our Khasi, Munda and Santali. On the other hand, Languages of Marma, Mandi, Tripura, Chak, Khumi, Pangkho etc, in our country and languages of those of China, Thailand, Myanmar and Tibet regions are included in the Tibeto-Burmese language family.

### Different Language Families and their languages in Bangladesh

Language Families	Branches	Ethnic Groups
1. Austro-Asiatic	Mon-Khmer	Khasi
	Mundari	Santal, Munda etc.
2. Sino-Tibetan	Bodo	Mandi(Garo),Kokbarak, Koch Palia, Rajbangshi,etc
	Kuki-Chin	Meitei, Khumi, Bawm, Kheyang Pangkho, Lushai, Mru etc

	Sak-luis	Chak, Thar or Thek.
	Tibeto-Burmese	Marma, Rakhain etc.
<b>3. Dravidian</b>		Kurukh and original Malto (at present almost extinct)
<b>4. Indo-European</b>		Bangla, Chakma, (Tangchngya) Bishnupriya, Sadri, Hajong etc.

### Exercise

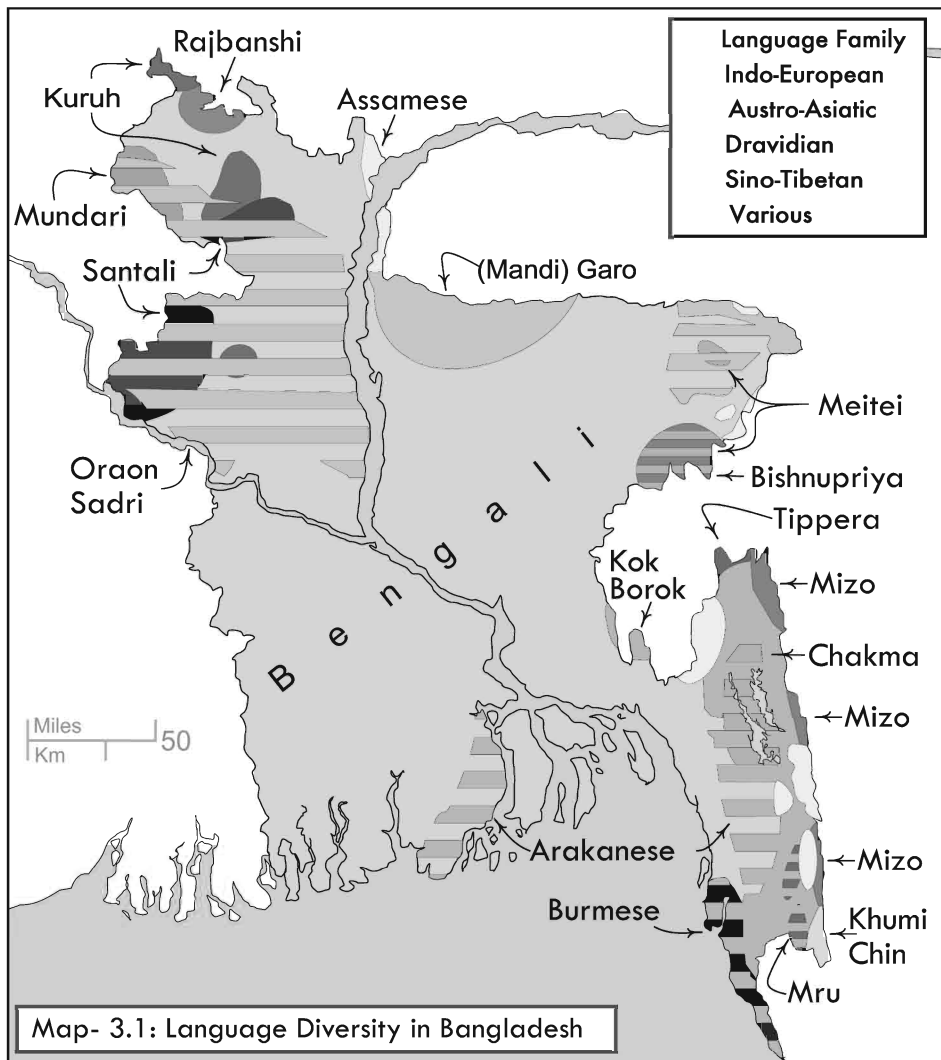
**Task-2 :** Make a list of the language families of ethnic minority groups.

## LESSON- 02 : MAP OF LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN BANGLADESH

Considering their origin, many languages are found to be connected with each other. A great deal of exchange and interactions among different languages also take place. Despite that, each language is a unique and unparallel means of expression. Mother tongue is an important aspect of the identity of any human being. Language is essential not only for creativity and expression; every language contains unique cultural knowledge and experience. Through linguistic exchange, we can enrich ourselves by the diverse range of knowledge and experience of the world.

Languages of minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh belong to the four major language families viz: (1) Indo-European, (2) Tibeto-Burmese (3) Austro-Asiatic and (4) Dravidian language families. The languages of Mundari branch which is a part of the Austro-Asiatic family are the oldest languages of this region. At present the Santal, Ho, Munda and Mahle communities living in the northwest of Bangladesh and the Khasi ethnic group of Sylhet speak in the languages which belong to the Austro-Asiatic family. For that reason, Santali and Mundari languages of Austro- Asiatic family are found in Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Rangpur region of the northwest of Bangladesh. The Kurukh language of the Oraon and the Paharia ethnic groups of the northwest originate from the Dravidian family. It is assumed that about six to eight thousand years ago, the Tibeto-Burmese speaking people came to

this region. Languages of the Mandi (Garo) of Mymensingh, the Meitei and Pangan Manipuri of Sylhet and different ethnic groups of Chittagong Hill Tracts including the Marma, Tripura, Khumi, Bawm, Mru and others belong to the Tibeto-Burmese language family. About five thousand years ago, the Aryans who spoke a language of Indo-European family entered the subcontinent. The Bangali people speak in Bangla language which is a descendant of Indo-European language family. Along with the Bangali, languages of the Chakma of Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Bishnupriya Manipuri of Sylhet and Sadri of the Oraon in north Bengal belong to the Indo-European family.



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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Draw a map of Bangladesh. and then Identify the location of different language communities by using different colours.

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### LESSON- 03: AUSTRO-ASIATIC LANGUAGE FAMILY

Although the population of Austro-Asiatic language speakers is relatively small in size, they reside over a wide area. The speakers of this language family live in the places that range from Africa, Australia to Indochina. As a result of many years' strenuous research, it has been revealed that the earliest and main language of Bangladesh belonged to the Austric language family. In fact, many of the languages spoken in the Indian Subcontinent are known as members of the Austro-Asiatic language branch. The Austro-Asiatic languages spoken in Bangladesh are divided into two main branches: Mon-Khmer and Mundari.

○ **The Mon-Khmer Branch:** At present, more than 100 languages exist within the branch of Mon-Khmer. These languages are spoken in a number of places that range from India to Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, China to Malaysia, and Nicobar Island of the Indian Ocean. Khasi language is an example of Mon-Khmer language spoken in Bangladesh.

○ **Mundari Branch:** Most linguists consider Mundari branch to be a part of the Austric language family although some people have different opinions. However, Munda and Santali languages are instances of Mundari language branch in Bangladesh. These two languages are said to be the oldest languages of this region.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** In which countries of the world do the speakers of Austro-Asiatic language family reside?

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### LESSON- 04: SINO-TIBETAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Linguists recognize that the languages belonging to the Sino-Tibetan family are spoken in vast regions of the eastern hemisphere that range from mid-Asia, Myanmar (Burma) and Balistan to Peking (Beijing). About two to three hundred languages are included in this family. Although the language family goes by the name Sino-Tibetan, the languages included

in this family are known as Tibeto-Burman. Languages of this family that are used in India are categorized into two parts. One is the Chinese or Sino and the other is the Tibeto-Burmese. The Tibeto-Burmese again is divided into two. One is the Tibeto-Himalayan, and the other is Assam-Burmese. Assam-Burmese is again divided into several branches, such as: Bodo, Naga, Kuki-Chin, Kachin, Burmese etc.

- a. **Bodo Branch:** Mandi (Garo), Kokborok (Tripura) etc languages belong to this branch.
- b. **Kuki-Chin Branch:** The common languages of this branch in Bangladesh are the languages of the Meitei Manipuri, Lushai, Bawm, Kheyang, Khumi, Mru and Pangkho.
- c. **Sak-luis Branch:** Language of the Chak community of Bandarban and the Thar or Thet language of the snake-charmers (*Bede* community) belong to this branch.
- d. **Tibeto Burmese Branch:** The Marma and Rakhain languages represent the Burmese branch of the Sino Tibetan language in Bangladesh. This branch is quite old and very rich.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Where are the branches of Sino-Tibetan language family extended in the world?

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**Task-2 :** Among the minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh, who are the members of the Sino-Tibetan language family? Mention their names.

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### LESSON- 05: DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

The Dravidian languages were in practice in India long before the advent of the Aryans. In Bangladesh, Kurukh, the language of the Oraon is a language of Dravidian family. Once upon a time Dravidian languages were also used by other ethnic groups like the Paharia and Malto. At present, these are almost extinct and now they use Sadri language.

**Kurukh Language:** Once the Oraon or Kurukh-speaking people used to live in almost all districts of northern Bangladesh. As their habitation decreased over the years, the Kurukh-speaking Oraon now live in Dinajpur and Rangpur districts only. Besides, a small group of the Oraon reside in the tea-gardens of Sylhet. At this moment, their population size in Bangladesh is almost 25,000.

Kurukh language is an old language. Basically it is a colloquial or spoken language. This language has no alphabet. At present, among all the ethnic groups in Bangladesh, the Oraon are the only users who belong to the Dravidian language family.

**Paharia Language:** About 8000 people of the Paharia ethnic group reside in Rajshahi, Joypurhat and Dinajpur districts of Bangladesh. There are two branches of the Paharia ethnic group: one is the Shaoria Paharia and the other is Mal/Mar Paharia. The population size of the Mal Paharia is relatively small in Bangladesh. Although their language is called Malto, in effect it is a mixed language. As a result of living alongside the Bangali for many years, the original language has been lost.

**Mahle Language:** The language of Mahle ethnic group of northern Bengal is called the Mahle language. Original form of this language is almost extinct by now. It also belonged to the Dravidian language family. At present, only a few words of the original language are found to be used in the colloquial of the Mahle people. Such words are: *dak*, (water), *ir* (paddy), *daka* (rice), *dangra* (cow, bull) etc.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1** : In which areas, languages of the Dravidian language family are used?

**Task-2** : In Bangladesh, which ethnic minorities' languages belong to the Dravidian language family? Which languages have extinct?

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## LESSON- 06: INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Mother tongues of more than half of the world population belong to the Indo- European language family. Bangla is the most prominent Indo-European language used in Bangladesh. Language of the Chakma and the Sadri language used by the Oraon are included in this family too. Besides, the language of the Bishnupriya Manipuri is also a member of this family. Among other ethnic groups, languages of the Tangchangya and Rajbangshi are included in the Indo-European language family. It is assumed that this language family was introduced in India by the Aryans.

People or speakers of Indo-European language family came to India about five thousand years ago. Indo-European language started to be used as soon as they arrived. The oldest remains of this language are found in the *Rigveda*. Later on, the language of *Rigveda* or the Vedic language was transformed and took the form of Sanskrit language.

Another form of Sanskrit language, being changed through the practice of the commoners, took the form of Prakrito language. This language, too,

had undergone changes in people's tongue and came into contact with many other languages. From the different forms of deviation of this Prakrito language, current languages of north India were formed. As such, different languages of Indo-European language family came into their current forms through many processes.

Bangla, a member of Indo-European language family, is the most used language in Bangladesh. Bangla language originated around 800 to 1200 AD. It gradually developed from Maghdi-Prakrito language. The *Charyapada*, a collection of Buddhist religious mystic lyrics, composed around 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, is the example of the earliest written form of Bangla language. Bangla language underwent many changes and many evolutions that gave it the present shape. Languages, however, take different forms and shapes in different times and spaces. Therefore, languages are compared with a flowing river.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1** : Make a list of Indo European Language families of minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh.

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## EXERCISE

### Multiple Choice Questions

**1. How many language families do the languages of ethnic minorities of Bangladesh belong to?**

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| a) 4  | b) 6  |
| c) 12 | d) 14 |

**2. How many languages are in use in the present world?**

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| b) 5000 (approximately) | b) 6000 (approximately)  |
| d) 8000 (approximately) | d) 25000 (approximately) |

**3. ‘Language is a unique achievement’ –because by language**

- i. Human thoughts are expressed
- ii. Human feelings are expressed
- iii. Dependence is expressed

Which one is correct?

- a) i
- b) ii
- c) iii
- d) i, ii and iii

Read the following paragraph and answer question no 4 and 5

Aprila Shaoria is a member of Paharia ethnic group. Tasnim and Mahdi visited Aprila’s house in her village. They met Aprila’s grandfather at dinner and they could not understand many of the things he said.

**4. Aprila’s grandfather’s language is similar to-**

- i) Kurukh language
- ii) Paharia language
- iii) Mahle language

Which one is correct?

- a) i
- b) ii
- c) iii
- d) i and ii

**5. Language of the oldest member of the family belongs to Which language family?**

- a) Dravidian language
- b) Austro-Asiatic language
- c) Sino-Tibetan language
- d) Indo-European language



### Creative questions

1.

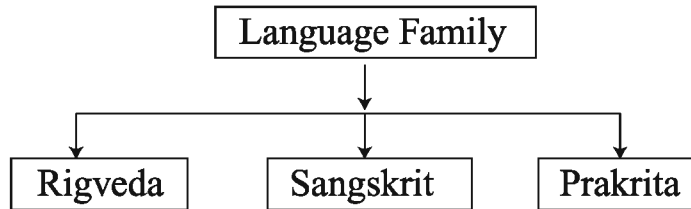


Figure: Evolution of Language Family

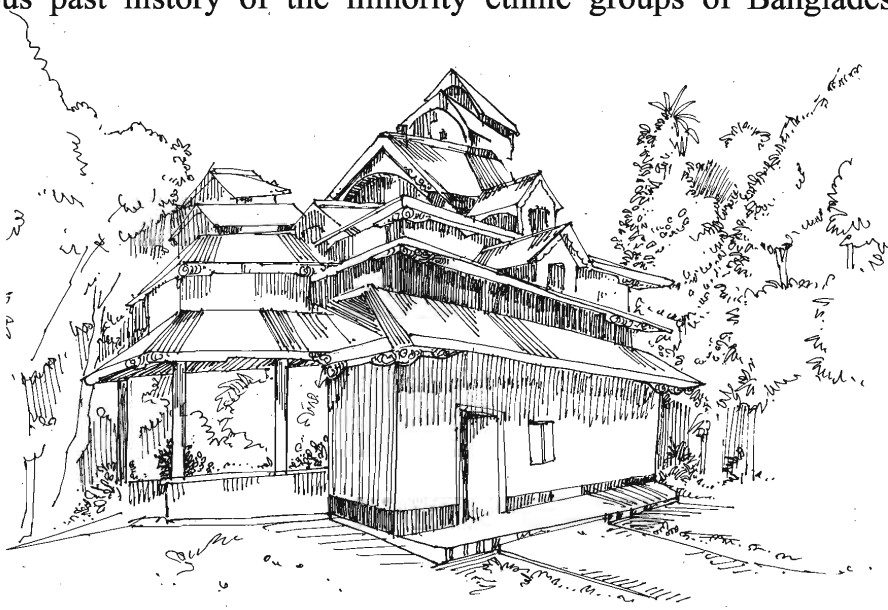
Answer the following questions

- a. What is the meaning of *ir* in Mahle language? 1
- b. Explain how languages were created. 2
- c. Identify the language family on the table and explain their development. 3
- d. "Bengali is the most used language belongs to the language families on the table above". Give reason in favor of your answer. 4

## CHAPTER- FOUR

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

In this chapter, we would know about the archaeological heritage of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh. Some archaeological relics have been discovered in Lalmai Hills of Comilla, Jointapur of Sylhet, Chunarughat of Habiganj, Sitakunda of Chittagong, and Rangamati and Khagrachari districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Various artifacts and structures such as old temples, old palaces of the local kings (*rajās*) and arms and weapons used by the royals, ornaments, old coins, furniture, seals, *puthi* etc were found in these places. This chapter discusses the archaeological traditions as well as the glorious past history of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh.



**Fig.4.1: The archaeological heritage of the minority ethnic groups.**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, we will be able to-

- Describe the archaeological sites of the minority ethnic groups.
- Give an account of their artifacts and ornaments used in their daily life and identify the diverse aspects of these items.
- Recognize the architectural designs of their worshipping places;
- Be interested to know about the background and locations of these archaeological sites;
- Be encouraged to visit these archaeological sites.

## **LESSON- 01: WHAT DOES ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MEAN?**

There are so many different types of people around us! How amazingly diverse are their languages, culture, history, and life styles! We are always keen and try to know the life and living of the people around the world. Well, have you ever asked yourselves if the humankind of the world, as we see them today, have always been like this? How were the people long ago? How did they change into what they are today? This curiosity makes us interested to know about the past of people.

We need to discover many missing links to know the details of our past. In most of the cases, these links remain elusive. In such cases, we have to depend on guessing to find out the clues from the past times. You must realize that it is a highly complex and extremely difficult task. Still the scientists are putting their efforts to know different aspects of our lost past. The scientists apply two main sources to know the people of the past and their culture. These sources are:(1) the skeleton, body remains and fossils and (2) the remnants of the material or visible elements of their culture. The dead bodies of the animals or other creatures including man who lived in the past became as hard as rocks when soil, minerals, dust etc deposited on them for millions of years. In some cases, the original bodily remains of the organism have been completely dissolved or destroyed but an organism-shaped hole is left in the rock. These traces of body remains are called fossils. Through studying these fossils, skeletons or remains of the body, we can get ideas about their body structure, physiology, diseases, causes of death, food habits, genetic characteristics or their environment of dwelling.

Second source of knowing our past is the material or observable elements of human culture. There are various artifacts of the past like the utensils, tools, other items which are not easily destroyed over time. Many of the artifacts which are made up of stones or metals remain intact for thousands of years. Such cultural evidences of the ancient men could be found buried under the soil or in the old caves. From the cave drawings to all objects used by the ancient men we can have some ideas about their living. When gradually the ancient people invented the written form of their language and began to use the alphabets, human history became more evident and explicit to us.

Archaeological anthropology studies human life from the visible or material objects of human culture. In archaeological studies, different types of tools and materials used by the ancient people are very important. A small stone tool may become the source of a great deal of information. It bears the evidence of thoughts, labour, and living of men from earlier periods. Therefore, whenever the archaeologists recover such an evidence, they begin to find out the answers to questions like ‘what was the time of that object, how was it made, who made

it, why or for what purpose did they make it, why did they make that in that way. Besides which materials did they use, where and how did they collect the elements, what type of technology did they use, how much time and labour did they employ' and so on. In consequence, they begin to know about the food habit, technological knowledge, tools, and utensils of the prehistoric man. In addition to this, by analyzing different proofs, information and evidence, they construct ideas about their social system, habitation, production methods, religious belief etc. In this way, the archaeological anthropology gives us complete ideas about the continuity of culture among the earlier and modern man, and similarities and dissimilarities in the cultures of different regions.

**HOW ARCHAEOLOGISTS WORK:** The archaeologists follow specific methodology and reach their conclusion through following step by step examinations and analysis. Now we will get some ideas about ways archaeologists analyse and explain archaeological evidences.

**1. Selection of Archaeological Sites:** Selection of place is very important for archaeological research. Surveying geography of a particular region, surrounding environment and analyzing small evidences, if it appears that more evidences could be discovered here, the archaeologists select that place for their further research. This selected place is called an archaeological site. A single object found suddenly might indicate that more evidences or similar items could be available through further excavation. But that does not happen always. Therefore, a site has to be selected after proper survey.

**2. Collection of Different Samples and Evidences:** In this step, archaeologists collect various sample objects from the site. These samples include different archaeological evidences, materials or installations. In this effort, a large group of archaeologists and their associates begin to excavate and collect different items. Then the samples are tested in the laboratory to determine the age of that sample.

**3. Recording the Data:** Keeping records and writing the detailed description of the samples collected and their sources are an essential task of the archaeologists. This description is very important for comparison and determination of age of different samples and their sources.

**4. Explanation, Analysis and Conclusion:** This is the most important step. After analyzing all available information, data, samples recovered, evidences and sources, the archaeologists come to a decision. For this they consider some important aspects of analysis, which are: (a) idea about the lifestyle or culture of

the early men of that area, (b) idea about the early history of the world and (c) determining the trends of development and changes of human culture.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** What ideas can we attain through discussing the archaeological traditions of the ethnic minorities?

## LESSON- 02 : ARCHAEOLOGICAL TIME SCALE AND CONTINUITY OF CULTURE

In order to discuss the history of the world or the origin of mankind, it is important to have some idea about the timeline and different epochs. Therefore, different branches of science make several divisions of past time. For the convenience of studying the natural condition of the world and evolution of human culture, the past timeline is divided into discrete named periods, eras and ages. By doing so, we can sequentially relate the geological conditions with human physical and cultural situations of different periods of the past. Three time scales of this type are given in the table below :

***Cosmic Time Scale :*** The cosmic time is divided into different periods for the discussions of the origin, creation and series of changes of the universe.

***Geological Time Scale :*** The earth was formed about 4.6 billion years ago. Since then, gradual geological changes took place and the earth became suitable for habitation of man and other organisms. In order to study the geological changes and origin of life on earth, the geological time is set by dividing the 4.6 billion years into several discrete time units.

***Human Time Scale :*** To study the emergence of man, evolution of human body structure and physiology, and successive cultural changes, archaeological anthropology divides the past timelines into several named periods.

In this chapter, we will discuss about the human time scale. From the discussions of different periods of human time scale, we will know the cultural condition of the minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh from different lessons of this chapter.

## HUMAN TIME SCALE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE

Generally human past time line is divided into two periods in archaeological anthropology: (1) Historical period and (2) Prehistorical period. By historical period we mean the time since the innovation of written form of human language had started. As a result of the discovery of writing methods by alphabets or pictographs (picture writings), people of different historical periods left the

description of social, cultural, economic and political life of their respective times. From those historical documents, we specifically know about the history and life of different periods and time. For example, there are reliable historical documents about the Gupta dynasty, the Pala Kingdom, or the Mughal Empire. So the age of these empires can be separately discussed and their conditions can be compared with that of the other empires of that period.

Our knowledge of human life and culture before the invention of the writing system is largely based on assumption. By 'prehistoric' we mean the time before the invention of the written form of language. In the beginning, the early man of the prehistoric period learned the use of stones, i.e. they invented different techniques of making various stone tools. Gradually, they learned the use of various metallic things like bronze, copper and iron. On the basis of types of the tools and artefacts, technology used by the prehistoric man, the prehistoric time has been divided into three periods or ages in archaeological anthropology: (1) Stone Age, (2) Bronze and Copper Ages, and (3) Iron Age. Technological development did not occur at the same time or in the same manner everywhere in the world. Therefore, dating of these archaeological periods also varies considerably in various areas of the world.

**(1) The Stone Age:** The earliest period of the prehistoric time is called the Stone Age. This age is divided into three periods. The cultural evolution in this period is discussed here.

**A) Paleolithic Age :** In this age, man learned the use of fire. In addition to that, people of this period could make tools and artefacts from stone and animal bones such as: sharpened stone, chopper, hand-axe, spear etc. Food and other necessary items were collected from nature by hunting and gathering to meet the necessity of their food. People used to live in a group of 25 to 100 members having a nomadic life. They mostly used to live in caves or small cottages nearby rivers or lakes made by themselves.

**B) Mesolithic Age:** Major inventions of this period are hunting tools like spear, arrow, bow etc. and basket, harpoon and boat for fishing. Along with hunting and gathering, men of the Mesolithic age tried to collect seeds of wild corns and tame wild animals. The most significant cultural development of this time was the belief in supernatural powers and life after death. They used to observe funeral programmes for the deceased.

**C) Neolithic Age:** The tools and instruments were used for agriculture and self protection. Scythe, chisel, plough, earthen vessel, etc were the examples of technological development of this period. Other than agriculture, people used to do hunting, fishing and food collection for their livelihood. Due to increase in population and security reasons, people started to settle down in villages. The idea of worshipping the ancestors

and the idea of multi souls developed in this period. The advent of shaman (religious healers) and his associates appeared on the scene.

**(2) The Bronze and Copper Age:** At the beginning of this age, man invented the use of Copper first and later on the use of bronze. They made different tools and items of copper and bronze, such as: weaving machine and pottery wheels. Industry and commerce flourished to a great extent and different professional classes appeared. Gradually the city life and urban civilization started to evolve.

**(3) Iron Age:** Men started to use different instruments and artefacts made of iron. Communication developed to a great extent and therefore, connection between the capital and other towns was established. Rise of empires is a significant development of this time.

### Exercise

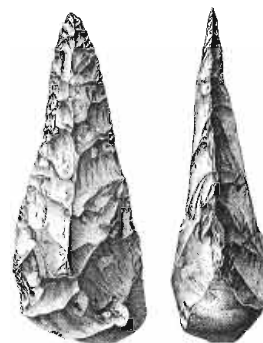
**Task-1 :** Mention the names of different archaeological periods.

**Task-2 :** Write the names of different elements of cultures during prehistoric period.

## LESSON- 03: HISTORY OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN BANGLADESH

The minority ethnic groups have been residing in this region from time immemorial. History of these communities living in Bangladesh could be traced from the remnants, artifacts and evidences left by these early people. In recent times, anthropologists attempt to explain the geographic origin of the early ancestors of different present-day ethnic groups and their early connections through comparative analysis of the human genes (bearer of human heredity). Following the methodology of archaeological anthropology, here we will discuss the archaeological traditions and cultural identity of the ethnic groups living in this region.

From the research conducted on human genetics (study of human heredity), it has been found that the first habitation of the modern human was in Africa. About 60 thousand years ago, they started migrating from that region. These early men first reached the south Arab region travelling through the present-day Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti which areas are commonly known as the 'Horns of Africa'. Later, they entered Iran through Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Then walking along the coastline, they proceeded on foot towards the east. Thus crossing the coast of Pakistan and India, early men spread over different regions of the eastern and south eastern Asia and Australia through Bangladesh.



**Fig. 4.2: Tools made of stones.**

Anthropologists identified the proofs of mobility and dwellings of different ethnic groups in Bangladesh and its surrounding places from various archaeological evidences. Some tools of the Upper Palaeolithic ages have been recovered in Chittagong, Rangamati, Chagnaiya of Feni, and Chaklapunji region of Lalmai hills. These evidences are presumed to be about 18 to 22 thousand years old. Tools of the Neolithic ages have been discovered in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Wari-Bateswar region of Narsingdi district which are estimated to be five thousand to eight thousand years old. Besides these some evidences of habitations and earthenware of Copper and Stone ages were discovered which were considered to be 5 thousand and a half to 4 thousand and a half years old. Development of urban civilization and trade in Bangladesh can be traced from different evidences found in the Mahasthangarh of Bogra and the recent discovery of different sites in Wari-Bateswar. It is assumed that human habitation in this location flourished from the seventh century BC to the sixth century AD. Reference of the early Bengal can be traced in the accounts and travelogues of the early travellers who lived between first century BC and the fifth century AD.

Duration of the settlement of the minority ethnic groups in this region goes back to the prehistoric age. In the past, the minority ethnic groups living in this country had a colourful life and a prosperous culture. Archaeological evidences scattered at various places are still bearing the proofs of that glorious past. Although there are a few evidences, these relics are quite significant to know their history, life and culture. Different archaeological evidences of minority ethnic groups are found in different places of Chittagong Hill tracts, Chittagong, Cox's Bazaar, Comilla, Sylhet and Mymensingh. There were palaces, temples, forts, ponds, wells, cave architecture, monument pillars etc that are worth mentioning among these evidences.



Fig.4.3: 'Machan ghar' of the minority ethnic people

Some very large ponds (*Dighis*) dug by the Tripura kings speak about their reign as silent witnesses even today. The famous Mathin's well is found in Teknaf. Dighinala upazila of Khagrachari district has been named after the *dighi* dug by the Tripura kings. It is known that once the Mughal commander Umed Khan attacked the fort of the Rakhain in the southern region of the Karnaphuli River. Then the Rakhains took refuge in the fort of Ramu, which fell to the Mughals eventually. Remnants of this fort are still there.

Initiatives for preservation of these archaeological evidences of the ethnic minorities are very limited. As a result, many of the evidences have been lost. Besides, many things are still undiscovered as any formal archaeological survey has not yet been done. Traces of those different archaeological evidences are found in the accounts of the colonial administrators, travellers, churches or from the personal collection of local inhabitants. In addition, there are some government initiatives for the preservation of the archaeological evidences of the ethnic groups. The ethnological



Museum located at Agrabad in Chittagong city, the Cultural Institutes in three hill districts and the institutions for the ethnic groups located at other places (Birishiri, Manipuri Lalitkala Academy) and the Barendra Museum etc are founded at government initiatives. We will discuss some archaeological evidences of the minority ethnic groups in the following lessons.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** write the names of the Institutes of Bangladesh which contributed to preserve the archiological evidences.

## LESSON- 04: CHAKMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE & CHAKMA RAJBARI

There are a number of evidences of the habitation of Chakma ethnic group in the Chittagong region even in the distant past. Many valuable proofs of the thousand years' reign of Chakma Raja have been lost in the oblivion of time. In spite of this, some evidences of the reign of this dynasty are found here and there even today. Of these evidences, two palaces of the Chakma dynasty bear historical significance. One of the palaces is the remains of old palace of the Chakma king lying at 25 km away from Chittagong town at Rajanagar of Rangunia , together with a big *dighi*, a trench around and a Buddhist temple built during the reign of Queen Kalindi (1844-1873AD).

Although the foundation of the temple was laid down long ago, actual development and construction of the palace were completed at the time of Chakma king Janbox Khan (1782-1797 AD). The king shifted the Chakma capital from Alikadam to Rangunia and named the capital Rajanagar. Today this palace is almost extinct due to lack of proper maintenance. Unparallel in its architectural design, the palace occupies about 52 acres of land and is made of Chakmabricks and stones. Its each wall is 3ft wide.



**Fig. 4.4: Remnants of Chakma Rajbari.**

In addition to the main building, the palace accommodated a colossal court of the king, *pilkhana* (stable) for elephants and horses, sagardighi (large pond) with paved banks, other buildings built for the employees of the king, royal court,

Buddhist monastery, mosque, temple, etc. In spite of being dilapidated, this palace is famous even today for many historical events. King Harishchandra shifted the capital from Rajanagar of Rangunia to Rangamati in 1883 AD.

Afterwards, King Bhuban Mohon Roy built a new palace in Rangamati. This beautiful two storied building is a unique evidence of Chakma architecture. Within the boundary of the palace, there lie the well-decorated royal palace, royal court, Buddhist temple, king's treasury and residential quarters for the king's employees etc. After the death of the king Bhuban Mohon Roy, his son king Nalinaksha Roy ruled from 1935 to 1951 AD.



Fig. 4.5: Chakma palace submerged in Kaptai Lake.

After the death of king Nalinakshma Roy, his eldest son Tridib Roy took up the responsibility of Chakma community as the 50<sup>th</sup> King of Chakma dynasty on March 2, 1953. During his reign, Pakistan government constructed the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam in 1960 on the Karnaphuli river. Due to the construction of the dam, the old palace of the

Chakma king, the Buddhist temple and 52000 acres of agricultural land including one thousand acres of royal land properties were submerged. About one hundred thousand people became homeless. Later on, the Chakma king Tridib Roy built another new King's palace at Rangapani mouja of Rangamati.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Write the names of some evidences of the rule of Chakma dynasty in Chittagong region.

## LESSON- 05: KHASI ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE & ANCIENT PALACE

The Khasi kings had their kingdom in Jointapur region of Sylhet. Jointapur lies at the feet of the Jointia hill at a distance of 40 km north of the Sylhet divisional town. There are wide expansions of high and low hilly ranges and valleys to the north and east, and to the south and west are the flatlands including numerous *haors* (marshlands) and low swampy lands. The remains of the old palace of the Jointia kings are scattered here and there over

an extended area. Among the remains, the king's court, a colossal altar (a place of slaughter or sacrifice), the Jointeswari temple, graveyard, monuments and stone-made pillars of the houses etc are remarkable. The palace built by Jointia King Lakshmi Singh in 1680 AD is almost destroyed now.



The ancient evidences of the Jointapur kingdom of the Khasi have been found in wide areas of Sylhet.

**Fig.4.6: Remnants of the khasi palace at Jointapur**

The most significant remnants are the royal court, monuments, temple, declarations inscribed on stones, different sketches on rocks such as: Lord Shiva's weapon, lotus, *Dharmachakra* (wheel of life), dwelling places etc. The early Khasi people of the Austro-Asiatic race came to the Sylhet region by the end of the Neolithic age. Some archaeological evidences of 13<sup>th</sup> century BC were found in the Khasia hills of India. It is assumed that the archaeological evidences found in Jointapur of Bangladesh have correlation with those of India.

### Exercise

**Task-1 : Why is Jointapur famous?**

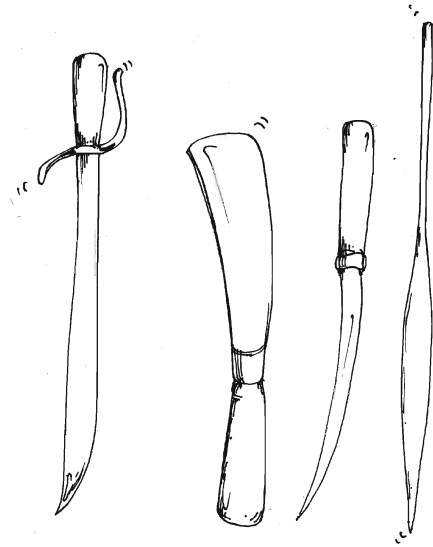
## LESSON- 06 : DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS, TOOLS, UTENSILS AND ORNAMENTS

The instruments and other artifacts used by the ethnic people of Bangladesh bear their tradition and heritage. Many century-old archaeological evidences and pictures preserved in the palaces of Chakma, Bomang and Mong circles of Chittagong Hill Tracts or in their family collections give evidence of the glorious past of these ethnic groups. In those antique collections there are the cannons, guns, sword, spear, bow, container of arms and

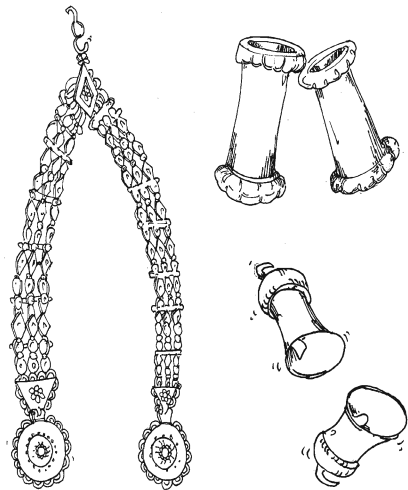
ammunition's axe, knives, shield, head cover, short dagger etc. These were basically used in warfare. Near the court of Rangamati palace, there is a cannon named 'Fateh Khan'. Besides, there are two more small sized cannons named 'kunjadhan' and 'kunjabi' respectively.

In addition to the ammunition, there are various antique objects in the personal collection of the kings including old coins, books (*puthi*), religious scripts, seals, crown of the king or the prince, royal costumes, palanquins and furniture with century-old rich inscription of beautiful designs, stamps made of gold or other valuable metal, royal medal, memoir or address of honour, jewellery, musical instruments, luxurious utensils, royal orders or declaration inscribed on the stones, historical documents etc and many other items. From these archaeological evidences, we can get an idea of socioeconomic, cultural, and political life of the ethnic groups living for hundreds of years. Similarly, there are similar archaeological evidences of other ethnic groups living in the plains including the Garo, Khasi, Manipuri and others.

The evidences of ancient utensils and ornaments were discovered in the usual locality of the ethnic groups. It is also important to note that calabash or coconut shells which were used as utensils at the beginning of the Neolithic age are still in use by some ethnic groups of Bangladesh. This tradition has been retaining for thousands of years. The calabash is still an essential pot among the Mru, kheng, Khumi and other minority ethnic groups. The people of the ethnic groups of Bangladesh have been using their traditional utensils made of bamboo, wood, cane, ivory, copper, bronze and brass etc by themselves for hundreds of years. These utensils have been used for various domestic purposes such as: keeping dresses, books, ornaments etc, carrying goods, cultivation and trade, and in various social and religious programmes. Despite the resemblances in texture and uses, there are significant dissimilarities in the utensils made and used by different ethnic groups. Some of these old and traditional utensils of the minority ethnic groups are being preserved in Chittagong Ethnological Museum, or in the possession of the royal families or others. In these collections, there are beautifully decorated jewellery boxes, flower vases, light hangers,



**Fig. 4.7: Different tools.**



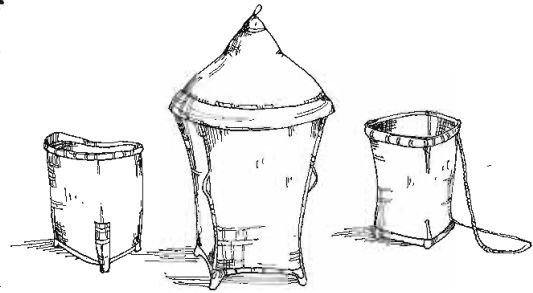
**Fig. 4.8: Earring and pendant made of silver**

pen stand, perfume containers, betel leaf holder case, hookahs made of copper, combs and sitting stools made of wood and ivory; pitcher, plates and a table like frame used for dinner (in Chakma it is called '*bhujangber*') made of copper, scabbard, pen, ink-holder, mirror, chandelier (a large decorative ceiling light), big temple bells, different weaving equipments, cloth bags with various designs and motifs, lanterns, pipe, fan, grinding stones for dusting spices etc, different useful utensils including furniture made of bamboo and canes.



**Fig. 4.9: Silver coin of colonial time.**

Even though the female members of the ethnic minority groups usually wear jewellery, in some communities both men and women use ornaments. Women usually use the ornaments made of metals like gold, silver, copper etc or of ivory and shells. Copper coins of the Mughal and British periods were basic items



**Fig. 4.10: Different baskets made of bamboo.**

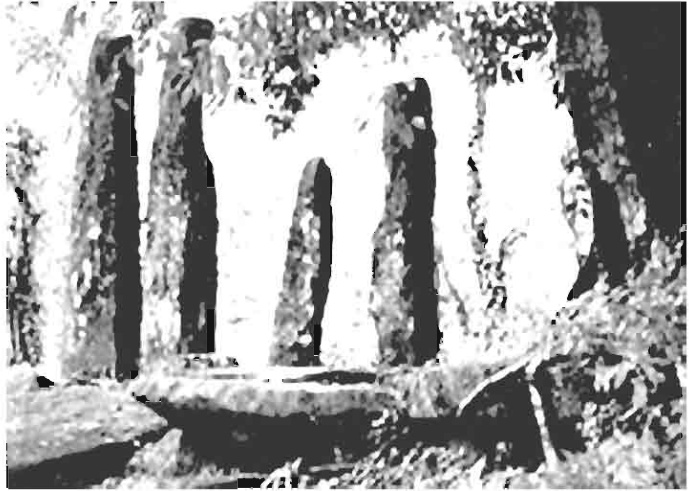
for making special necklaces. Among other ornaments, there were girdle, hair bun clipper, arm binders, arm-bracelet and ankle-bracelet, anklet (with jingle), bangle for the ankle, bangle (wrist ornament), nose key etc. In manufacturing these ornaments, they followed their own traditional designs. For that reason, although they used the same materials, there were significant differences in their respective ethnic traditions. Even today, the ornaments used in different cultural programmes bear the fashions of their old traditional designs.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Make a list of the old tools, ammunitions, utensils, ornaments and other traditional objects found to be used by the ethnic groups of Bangladesh in a table.

## LESSON- 07 AND 08: ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF THE SACRED PLACES

The aesthetic traditions of the minority ethnic groups are vividly present in the architectural designs of their worshipping places. In different periods of history, many temples, churches, pagodas, monasteries and other religious worshipping centres were built under the patronization of kings and aristocrats. In view of that, from the early age, different types of religious traditions, institutions and religious edifices of the minority ethnic groups have been established in Bangladesh. In this section, we will discuss some of their religious infrastructures.



**Fig. 4.11: Stone made Colossal altars, Jointapur**

### **The Jointeswari Temple:**

Some accounts of the habitation of the Khasi ethnic group can be traced from the different documents of the colonial administrators, and travelogues of the Greek, Roman and Chinese travellers. But the ancestors of the Khasi, i.e. the people belonging to the Khasi-Khamuik language group came to Bangladesh and north eastern regional states of India about eighteen thousand years ago. However, we get the written documents of their political history only from the fifteenth century onwards. During the period from the fifteenth century to 1835, just before being colonized by the British, Khasi or Jointia rulers built a number of palaces, monuments, temples etc in this region. The Jointia palace and the Jointeswari temple in Sylhet are such archaeological structures that symbolize the glorious past of the Khasi community.

In 1680, the Jointia king Lakshmi Singh built Jointeswari temple, a palace, and some tombs with colossal stones. Even though the king's palace is almost disintegrated due to lack of proper maintenance, some parts of the temple, and a few pillars are still surviving. The boundary wall of the temple complex is in a better position although its original shape is lost. On the wall

paintings, images of horse, lion, winged fairy and other imaginary animals and objects can be found.

There are at least 42 relics within the temple area. Among the installations, there are some monuments and 19 big and small pillars or megaliths of these tombs. An ancient colossal stone is called a 'megalith'. The long or vertical pillars of the megaliths are called 'menhir', and the rectangular or tabular pillars are called 'dolmen'. These monuments of Jointapur were built in the Neolithic period with the combination of both types of pillars.

**Buddhist Temples at Cox's Bazar:** Ramu Upazila of Cox's Bazaar district is a unique place for spectacular archaeological sites. Remains of Buddhist traditions are scattered here and there over the hilly area of around one square kilometre. At least 25 ancient statues of Buddha, made of local soil and stones, were recovered in this place. In addition to the statues, there are innumerable large or small colourful statues of Buddha made of gold, bronze and other metals in the temples.

The Rankut Banasram Bouddha Bihar, Ramu Shima Bihar, Lamapara Bihar are some of the most noteworthy architectures of old Buddhist temples discovered in Ramu. The Rankut Banasram monastery is the oldest one which was built in 308 BC. The river Baghkhali flows nearby the temple.



**Fig.4.12: Buddhist monastery at Ramu.**

The area is named Ramu after the Ramu dynasty of Arakan. Multoing Chandra, the king of Arakan, conquered Chittagong in 953 AD. Cox's Bazaar and Ramu belonged to the Arakan Empire till 1666 AD, until the capture by the Mughals. A huge Buddha statue of Mughal period has been discovered here which is almost 13 ft high. This was made of bronze and was the largest among the Buddha statues so far discovered in Bangladesh.

Ramu Shima Bihar, another ancient Buddhist monastery in this region, was built about four hundred years ago. A special kind of wood and the traditional Burmese architecture were used in the



**Fig.4.13: The old bell of the Buddhist temple.**

construction of temples. There are countless books in the library of the temple including the holy Tripitak and other books on history, literature and philosophy written in Burmese language. Another temple, named Lamapara monastery, is lying at a little distance. A big bell made of metal is one of the spectacular items of this monastery. There are some writings inscribed on the bell, but the writings are yet to be deciphered. It is known that the temple was built in the sixteenth century.

The largest Buddhist temple in Cox's Bazaar is the Mahasingdrogi Kyang, built in 1638 AD. by the Expatriate Rakhain king U-Agga Medha (who received this title after becoming a Buddhist monk). When he became disgusted with this worldly life of wars, fights and limitless greed of people. The ancient and attractive Chitmarang Buddhist Temple is located three kilometres away from the Kaptai Dam. The Rajban Bihar Buddhist temple located at Rangamati town has become renowned due to the initiative of the famous monk 'Banabhante'

Furthermore, some members of the Tripura dynasty built some Hindu temples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts long ago. The Kali Mandir in Panchari Upzila, Ayodhya Kali temple in Matiranga, Kamakutchara Shiv Mandir in Dighinala Upazila, and Jurmarang Shiv Mandir in Matiranga Upazila are some of these famous temples. These temples were built approximately two hundred to two hundred fifty years ago.



**Fig. 4.14: Rankut Buddhist Monastery built in 308 BC.**

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Write the names of some religious prayer houses of minority ethnic groups of Bangladesh.

**Task-2 :** Identify the location of any two Buddhist temples located in the district of Cox's bazar and Rangamati.



## EXERCISES

### Multiple Choice Questions

**1. In how many categories the historical period of humankind has been divided by the archaeologists?**

- a. 2
- b. 3
- c. 4
- d. 5

**2. The tools of which period have been discovered in Feni?**

- a. Paleolithic
- b. Mesolithic
- c. Neolithic
- d. Upper Paleolithic

**3. Major characteristics of the Bronze Age are**

- i. Use of mechanical tools in agriculture
- ii. Growth of trade and commerce
- iii. Belief in many Gods.

Which one of the following is correct?

- a. i
- b. ii
- c. i and ii
- d. ii and iii

**Read the following paragraph and answer the question no 4 and 5**

Rehan along with his friends went to an archaeological site in Narsinghdi for excursion. There he saw three thousand years old clay pots, stone made bangles and other ornaments. He found these quite interesting.

**4. Which era’s artifacts did Rehan see?**

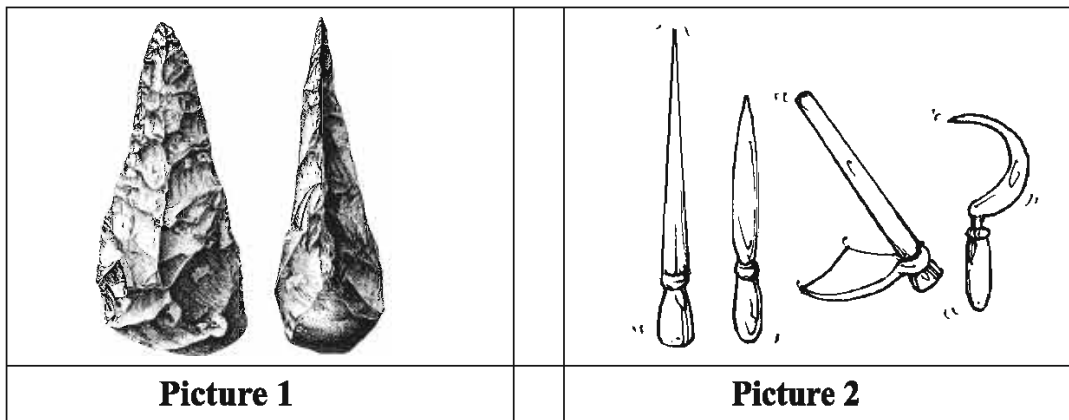
- a. Paleolithic
- b. Neolithic
- c. Copper
- d. Bronze

**5. Which aspect of human life of that era was evident in the artifacts Rehan saw?**

- a. Religious orthodoxy and Mana
- b. Political philosophy
- c. Economic affluence
- d. Culture and aesthetics

**Creative Questions:**

1.



- a. Which period is called the Prehistoric Age? 1
- b. Define the characteristics of the Palaeolithic Age 2
- c. Which era is indicated in Picture -1? What are the characteristics of that era? 3
- d. The era indicated in Picture 2 is said to be the foundation of modern civilization- Give reasons to this statement. 4

**2. Mother:** Seema, what are you doing so attentively?

**Seema:** I am making a flower vase with the coconut shell.

**Mother:** Wow! It is really wonderful. Do you know that ancient people used to make utensils with shells of coconut and bottle gourd? Even now-a-days the ethnic minority people in hill regions in our country use these items to make different types of pots.

**Seema:** These artifacts indicate the creative potentials of the ethnic minority people.

- a. What is fossil or micro organism? 1
- b. Describe the use of shells of coconut and bottle gourd in your own society. 2
- c. Which aspect of the ethnic minority life has been signified in the conversation of Seema and her mother? 3
- d. Discuss the significance of Seema's final comments. 4

# CHAPTER- FIVE

## SOCIAL LIFE OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

Human beings live in groups. Society develops from family and thereby human civilization rises. A number of social organizations are formed to regulate the human social life properly. Social systems of the minority ethnic groups are based on kinship. This means that their social activities are organized largely on the basis of kinship. This chapter aims at discussing some important features of social and cultural life of the minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh.



**Fig.5.1: The Jhum cultivation scenario of Chittagong Hill Tracts**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, we would be able to:

- Describe social life of the ethnic minorities;
- Describe the idea of Lineage and clan;
- Explain matrilineal and patrilineal descent systems and identify the difference between these two types;
- Describe the idea of marriage and family, types and functions;
- Evaluate the role of family in social life;
- Describe different forms of kinship system of the ethnic minorities;
- Identify different types of inheritance rules among the ethnic minorities.

## LESSON- 01: SOCIETY AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Human beings started living in groups in order to collect food and keep themselves safe from the attack of wild animals. Gradually society developed through practicing similar cultural life by the people grouped together. At the beginning of civilization, human beings used to fulfil their needs for food and other necessities mostly by hunting and gathering. Then they learned domestication of animals and cultivation. Nomadic life of men came to an end when they learned food production. They permanently settled down in different places and the size of the groups also began to increase gradually.

Human beings built social systems to carry out various demands of human life. Family as well as other social, economic, religious and political institutions developed to appropriately organize the social groups. All social institutions function to fulfil the demands of men. At the same time, social organizations and institutions support each other in proper functioning of their responsibilities and duties. For that reason, interrelationship of social institutions develops in society. This interrelationship of the social institutions is called the social structure.

All social institutions have certain aims and objectives. One of the main objectives of any social institution is to introduce rules and regulations, obligations and duties, and the social condition to the new members of society. Family is such a social institution. From our childhood, family teaches us the customs and behaviour, duty, rules and regulations, and disciplines of society. Not only that, it is the family that provides a child with necessary guidelines to be a responsible member of the society.

Another objective of the social institution is to arrange its production, reproduction, supply and distribution. For example, an important aim of the family is to produce offspring. A man is born in a family, gradually he grows up and later on he takes up the social responsibilities as a member of the society. With the pace of growing up, roles and activities of a man change. As it happens in the family, in all social institutions, a new generation takes up their responsibilities when a generation becomes old. Thus the society survives through ages. So a family produces and supplies new members to society.

The social institutions distribute specific responsibilities and duties to its members. For example, in a family each and everyone of the family including father, mother, brother and sister has to perform some specific rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities. We can maintain cooperation and live happily within the family by properly performing these responsibilities and duties and playing our respective roles.

Like the family, all social institutions develop with an aim to distribute responsibilities and ways to accomplish those responsibilities in the right manner. But the compositions of social institutions and the responsibilities and duties

specified for their members differ from culture to culture. We can cite the examples of the Khasi community of Sylhet region and the Mru of Bandarban. There are significant differences in the economic institutions of these two cultures. The Khasi economy mostly depends on the cultivation of betel leaves. On the other hand, the economic institution of the Mru is based on *jhum* cultivation. As the cultivation methods of *jhum* (shifting agriculture) and betel leaves are different, responsibilities of the members of these economic institutions also differ considerably. In the same manner, there are sharp variations in the forms of other institutions including the family in these two cultures.

### Exercise

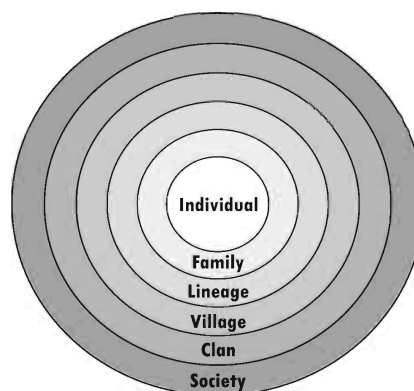
**Task-1 :** Why a family is called a social institution?

**Task-2 :** Make a table of the features of social institutions.

## LESSON- 02: HOW IS A SOCIETY ORGANIZED?

A society is organized through the active relationships of individuals or clans. This dynamic relationship is called the social organization. The smallest unit of social organization is the relationship between any two persons in a society. Let us consider the relationship between a father and a son. The relationship between the father and the son also varies from culture to culture. Among the Santal, the son inherits his father's property. According to the Chakma customs, the son of the Chakma king is the next king. The relationship between father and son is completely different among the Khasi people of Sylhet or among the Mandi people of Mymensingh. Here the daughter inherits her mother's property while the son does not inherit any property at all.

The second layer of a social organization is a small social group. A small social group is formed with the association of three or more individuals. The members of this group perform their duties jointly or in collaboration. Depending on the type of relations and bonds among the members, different social groups are formed. For instance, a family is a small social group which is organized on the basis of the marital relation of a man and a woman. Children of the family grow up within the family. The male members of the family carry out specific duties while the females accomplish some other responsibilities.



**Fig. 5.2: Different layers of the social organization.**

Again the responsibilities of children and the older members of the family are different. So depending on age and gender, there is a division of works among the family members. A family becomes active through the performance of duties by its members. But here, too, distribution of responsibilities and duties depend on specific culture.

A number of families get connected through kinship. Kith and kin come forward to support a family at the time of its miseries and sorrows. Thus, one family provides supports and cooperation to other families because of their kinship. Therefore, kinship is of great importance to us. Kinship can be said to be the basis of social bonds. The kins jointly carry out different social activities and rituals. On the basis of relations and their interactions, the families or the small social groups form greater social groups. A lineage is formed as an association of some families who are connected through kinship. Then a society is formed through active interaction and neighbourhood of several clans.

Social systems of the ethnic minorities are mainly Kinship-based. It suggests that their social activities are organized on the basis of kinship. Social life and role of a person including his social position, where he should live, who should be his friends, what social relationships he should maintain with others in the society, what should be the economic relations, what should be his role in the family or society- are determined by kinship. That means all social relationships develop through kin relations.

Kinship lays the basis of foundation of social organizations. Social networks and connections among individuals, families and social groups are created through kin relations. Kinship is the relationship through which rules of inheritance, descent, marriage system and families etc are organized. Already we have learned that a son inherits his father's property in many cultures; while in Mandi culture a daughter inherits her mother's property. The daughters of the family live in their parental village or nearby places after their marriage. Their brothers i.e. the sons go to their mother-in-law's house to live. As we see among the Mandi, kinship refers to the rules of inheritance, descent, marriage, formation of family and so on. So, it can be concluded that people lead their lives by kinship.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Write the names of the different stages of the formation of society?

**Task-2 :** What is a social group? Discuss the objectives of the formation of a social group?

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### LESSON- 03: KINSHIP AND ITS TYPES

As it is discussed above, social relationships among the ethnic minorities are determined mostly by kinship. Kinship forms social connections and solidarity. Therefore, studying kinship is the key to know the society and social life.

Roles and duties of a man in the society are determined on the basis of kinship. For example, you are someone's brother. From your childhood, you have learned from your family how the duties, responsibilities and rights of a brother should be carried out. So as soon as someone calls you brother, *bhaiya* sister, *didi* or *apu*, a social role is assigned to you and a specific set of behaviour as a brother or a sister is expected to be carried out. At the same time it should also be noted that roles and duties of a brother or of a sister are different in various cultures. For example, among the Mru, a boy considers his uncle's (brother's of father) daughter as his own sister while his maternal cousin (daughter of mother's brother) is considered as his potential bride. In the Mru society, there is the custom of marrying the maternal cousin sister.

A man in the society is connected with another man in many forms of relationships. All these relations are regulated by some specific social rules and regulations. It is clear from the example of the Mru society that the relationship with paternal cousin could be different from the relationship with maternal cousin based on specific cultural norms. According to the cultural norms of the Mandi and the Khasi, the grooms go to the house of brides and build up family there.

As such, there are differences in all forms of social relationships including the relationships of father-son, father-daughter, brother-sister, mother-son and mother-daughter. As a result, their behaviours and roles are also different due to these different relations. So we can conclude that like the Mru, Mandi or Khasi societies, each culture separately determines the kinship patterns.

Let us have a discussion on different types of kinship. All of us are connected with other members of the society in different relations. We find many forms of social relationship in a society. Some members of the society are our blood relatives, some are friends and some are neighbours. In addition to blood relations, there are other forms of relations too. We get connected with new relatives through marriages of any of our family members or relatives. However, kinships are not only founded on the basis of blood and marital relations, some fictive relationships can also have vital role in social life. Therefore, kinship relations can be divided into three types :



Relations	Definitions
<b>1. Blood/ Consanguineal kin</b>	The kins who are connected by the relations of blood are called consanguineal relatives. For example, a person is connected with his parents, offspring, brother, sister, grand-son and granddaughters by blood.
<b>2. Marital Affinal kin</b>	Those who are related by marriage are called marital relatives. Through a marriage, there develops a number of relationships among the members of both families. For example, when a woman marries, she becomes related not only with her husband, but also with other members of her husband's family as an aunt, daughter-in-law or sister-in-law. Such kins are also called affinal kins ( <i>kutum</i> ).
<b>3. Fictive kin</b>	In our life, we are as intimate to some people as we are with our blood relatives or marital relatives. In reality, they are not connected to us either by blood or by marriage. For example, we call our father's friend 'uncle'(chacha), or mother's friend 'aunt'(khala). We address our seniors as elder brother (bhai), or elder sister (apu or didi) and behave accordingly. These types of relations are called fictive relations and the relatives are called fictive kins.

In the next lessons, we will learn how the ethnic minorities organize their social system on the basis of kinship. Studying kinship and its expansion, anthropologists identify two rules of organizing kinship, viz: first, on the basis of rules of marriage and the second, on the basis of rules of descent.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** How many types of kinships are there?

**Task-2 :** Who are your blood and marital relatives? Give two examples for each category. Do you have any fictive kin?

## LESSON- 04: IMPORTANCE OF STUDIES ABOUT KINSHIP

Kinship is the motivation for man to live a social life. We don't feel good when we go to some places to stay for long time leaving our family, friends and relatives. We build up our location through our relations with our father, mother, brother and sister and thus we remain attached with the society. The significance of kinship in the social life of ethnic minority groups is very wide and vast.

In a society, social structure or the social organizations are formed upon the basis of kinship. By studying kinship system of a particular society, we may know about their social life. Basic constituent of any social organization is the interrelationship among the members of the society, and the foundation of

this mutual relation is kinship. Each member of a society feels proximity with the other either through blood or marriage relations or by fictive relations. For example, it is not at all possible to analyze a family as a social unit without understanding the kinship rules of that society. Family structure, marriage system, patterns of property ownership and inheritance are decided by the kinship rules. The descent system, i.e. relationships among the offspring and parents, brother–sister, is formed through kinship. Social bonds among the kin groups are structured through kinship which leads towards social solidarity and unity.

Kinship has a major role in leadership, social control and solution of conflict. The group of people related by the kinship feel inspired by the fellow-feelings in their social life. For that reason, they feel motivated to maintain social prestige and interest of their own group. In this way, members of a society actively participate in preserving their own tradition. As such, kinship has profound and far-reaching influence in social development and progress.

Kinship is the most important social organization of the ethnic minorities. Other social organizations like political, economic or religious institutions are structured and become active because of the active kin groups in society. Some significant roles of kinship are:

1. To unite different clans and lineages together by organizing marriage system in society. In many societies of minority ethnic groups, the bride and bridegroom are selected through some specific kinship rules. As a result, participation of all social groups is ensured and thereby social network and integrity are established.
2. To develop family with some definite responsibilities and aims. In order to maintain social continuity, kinship rules approve childbirth and bring up the child as a new member of the society both mentally and physically by teaching culture.
3. To create social bonds among different social groups for organizing political activities and to play vital role in settling social disputes and conflicts.
4. To keep the economy of a society dynamic by organizing rules of property inheritance and production system. Kinship rules ensure access to resources. Kinship determines in absence of someone who will get how much from his or her property.
5. Children are brought up and educated on religious belief, behaviour and

morality by the family and kin groups.

6. To identify behaviour of one person with another, mutual responsibilities, duties and rights in case of organizing the society.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Why is it important to study kinship?

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### LESSON- 05: TERMS OF KINSHIP

As social activities and cultural life are organized on the basis of kinship relations, variations in kinship rules also make a great deal of difference in social behaviours and activities. In different cultures, there are the traditions of addressing the kins with different terms. We determine the kins through these terms and identify the definite social relationships with them. There are certain definite terms to indicate the relatives in each culture. These set of terms to refer to kins is called kinship terminology.

Our behaviors with our kins depend on the terms we use to address them. On the basis of these terms, We consider someone as a friend, others fit to joke with or others better to avoid. For example, if is called 'dulabhai' (brother-in-law) in Bangali culture, the relationship with him is a joking one. When someone is called chacha (uncle) in the same culture, then he is not treated like a 'dulabhai'. Because the chacha (uncle) is a respectful one in relation and the relationship of him with the brother's son is of affection and control. On the other hand, the relationship of the 'bhagina' (sister's son) with mama (maternal uncle) is cordial and friendly. In Mandi society, rules of behaviour with chacha and mama are completely opposite to the rules in Bangali society. Among the Mandi, relation with the chacha is friendly and that with mama is of affection and control. In the Mru society, married males usually try to avoid their in-laws. In this society, the father-in- law and relatives of the bride's side are called 'Tutma' and the social position of the 'Tutma' is very high in comparison to the social status of the groom's clan. With these kinship terms, we identify what is our relationship with others and also understand the socially expected behaviour with them. Therefore, we understand the near and far relations and the social importance of those relations from the terms used for addressing the kins.

Generally there are two broad types of kinship terminologies, viz: 1) classificatory kin terms and 2) descriptive kin terms.

<p><b>1) Classificatory Kin Terms :</b></p>	<p>In this system, a single term is used to designate kins of different relationships. For example, among the Mru, the term ‘<i>nay</i>’ indicates the cousins including <i>Khalato Bhai</i> (mother’s sister’s son), <i>Fufato Bhai</i> (father’s sister’s son), and <i>Mamato Bhai</i> (mother’s brother’s son). But the <i>Chachato Bhai</i> (father’s brother’s son), as he belongs to the same clan is called ‘<i>ei</i>’ or ‘<i>naopa</i>’. So ‘<i>nay</i>’ is a classificatory term. English word ‘cousin’ is such a classificatory term.</p>
<p><b>2) Descriptive Kin Terms :</b></p>	<p>In this system of terminology, each and every relative is described with a separate term. In Bangali culture when we say ‘<i>Khalato</i>’, ‘<i>Mamato</i>’, ‘<i>Fufato</i>’, ‘<i>Chachato</i>’ <i>bhai</i> (brother) or <i>bon</i> (sister), we mean individuals and definite person.</p>

On the basis of kinship rules in different cultures, the relatives are divided into some categories. Some cultural rules of classification for calling the kins according to the definite terms are mentioned below:

<p><b>Rules of Previous and Later Generations</b></p>	<p>Difference between the former and the later generation is identified by kinship terminologies. For example, in Bangali society, terms like <i>Dada-Dadi</i>, <i>Nana-Nani</i>, <i>Baba-Ma</i>, <i>Chacha-Chachi</i>, <i>Mama-Mami</i>, <i>Khala-Khalu</i>, etc are used to indicate the previous generation of any person. Again, by the terms <i>Bhagina</i>, <i>Bhagini</i>, <i>Bhatija-Bhatiji</i> etc indicate the members of the later generation.</p>
<p><b>Rules of own Generation</b></p>	<p>In the same Bangali society, all kins of the same generations are addressed with separate terms. For example, <i>Chachato Bhai-Bon</i> (father’s brother’s son or daughter), <i>Mamato Bhai-Bon</i> (mother’s brother’s son or daughter), <i>Fufato Bhai-Bon</i> (father’s sister’s son or daughter) etc are referred to the kins of the same generation of an individual.</p>
<p><b>Rules of Age</b></p>	<p>There are separate terms according to the difference of ages of the kins. For example, I don’t address my elder brother with the same term by which I address my younger brother. In Mru society, all boys of the same clan and same generation are considered as brothers, and elders are called ‘<i>ei</i>’ and younger’s are ‘<i>naopa</i>’.</p>

<b>Rules of Gender Identity</b>	Among the kins, there are separate terms for males and females.
<b>Rules of Blood and Affinal Relations</b>	In Bangali society Baba, Ma, Chacha etc are the kins of blood relationship. But Bhabi, Chachi, Dulabhai etc are the relatives by marriage.
<b>Rules of Descent</b>	Separate terms are used for addressing the kins of father's and mother's sides. In the Mru society, 'Pu' is the mother's brother, father's sister's husband is 'Tranag' and the brother of the father is 'Pa'.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Make a table of the types of kinship?

**Task-2 :** Present in a diagram the categories of relatives based on the kinship terminology?

## LESSON- 06 : DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARRIAGES

Marriage is one of the most important institutions in human social life. A family is formed through marriage and the children are reared in the family. The society sustains through children and family. Different societies organize marriages through their own rites and rituals. Same types of marriages as we find in our respective societies are not necessarily common in every society. According to different cultural rules, types and processes of marriage might vary in different societies.

Marriage is a kind of social bond between a man and a woman for bearing and rearing children. Although there are differences in forms of marriage system, marriage as an institution exists in each and every society. A family is formed through marriage. Family activities are distributed among the members of the family and executed accordingly. Even a relationship between two descent groups that is of the bride and of the bridegroom is established through marriage. Social amity, friendship and cooperation are established among different families, lineages, clans and other kin groups through marriage relations. In this way, different conflicts, disputes or confrontations are either mitigated or resolved. In order to strengthen the relationships between different people and unite them, marriage is of immense importance in our social life.

**Types of Marriages:** Although there are different forms of marriages in different societies, here we will discuss only the types of marriages from two important perspectives. On the basis of selection of bridegroom and bride, two widely used rules of marriages are: (1) the social identity of the bridegroom and bride and (2) the number of husbands and wives

### **(1) MARRIAGE BASED ON KIN GROUPS**

**Marriage within the Same Group:** In this marriage system, bridegroom and the bride are selected from within the same social group. It means that the members of a big social group marry among themselves. This form of marriage is also known as endogamy.

**Marriage outside the Group:** Small kin groups generally marry outside their own group but within their ethnic community. In this system, the bridegroom and the bride are selected from any two of the small social groups or clans. In this type of marriage, different social rules and restrictions are maintained. As the marriage is held outside one's own group, this form of marriage is called exogamy. For example, almost all societies prohibit the marriage in the same family. Therefore, marriage is held between the members of two different families or two descent groups.

### **(2) MARRIAGE BASED ON THE NUMBERS OF SPOUSE:**

**Monogamy:** The marriage system in which one man marries a woman is called monogamy. This form of marriage is widely practised in the present world.

**Polygamy:** In this system, a man marries more than one woman or a woman marries more than one man. In this society a family consists of more than one husband or wife. For example, a man is found to marry more than one woman in some Muslim families. In some ethnic societies of Nepal and Tibet, one woman may have more than one husband. In these societies, a woman may be married to all the brothers of a family.

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#### **Exercise**

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**Task-1 :** Why is marriage important in our social life?

**Task-2 :** What are the different types of marriages? What types of marriage is practised in your own society?

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## **LESSON- 07: SOCIAL TABOOS AND RULES OF MARRIAGE OUTSIDE THE GROUP**

There are certain rules and regulations in all societies for the selection

of the bridegroom and the bride. All societies have certain rules and customs in relation to who can or cannot marry whom. These rules and customs relating to marriage are, of course, different in different cultures. Behind these rules and prohibitions, there are two major objectives. Firstly, one should not marry someone from his close relatives because in such cases, there is a fair chance of physical or mental disability of the children. The second aim is basically social. If marriage takes place among other families, new relations are created. Thus, the social network is increased and social unity and friendship among different social groups are enhanced. Of course, fulfilling the first objective accomplishes the second.



**Fig. 5.3: Marriage rules of the Santal.**

Where did men come from? There are different stories in different cultures about the origin of mankind. These stories that explain the origin of man and the universe are called myths. There is such a myth also among the Santal. According to this myth, Santal originated from a gander and a goose. Their first parents were – ‘*Pilchu Haram*’ and ‘*Pilchu Burhi*’. They had twelve sons and twelve daughters. At the beginning, there was marriage among these brothers and sisters. Thus, twelve clans came into being from twelve couples, namely: *Hasda, Murdi, Murmu, Baske, Hembrom, Besra, Soren, Chare, Kisku, Pauria, Tudu* and *Soale*. Then the first parents called them and told them, ‘In future, do not allow marriage between brothers and sisters. I have given you twelve clans. Henceforth you will let marriage between the members of one group to the members of other group’. Therefore, the Santal do not marry any member from within their own group and from other ethnic group. These restrictions are called social taboos. Fig. 5.3: illustrates the social taboos of the Santal marriage. According to the figure the Santal follow three basic rules in selection of the bridegroom and bride for marriage:

- 1) The inner circle has only one clan out of the twelve clans of the Santal, members of the clan must marry outside the group.
- 2) The second circle contains the greater society of the Santal where there are twelve clans. So someone of the family can choose spouse from the remaining eleven clans.
- 3) The third i.e. outside circle consists of neighbouring ethnic groups. As the Santal usually do not marry into other ethnic groups, this greater social group marry among themselves.

Like the Santal, marriage among the members of the same clan, lineage or family is prohibited in many cultures. Although there are differences in the restrictions on marrying within the same lineage or clan, marriage among the members of the same family is prohibited in almost all societies of the world today. So for all cultures, family is such a social group that always marries outside its own group.

In different cultures, lineage or clan is viewed as a big or extended family. This suggests that the brother-sister relationship among the boys and girls of the same lineage or clan gets priority. For that reason, marriages between the boys and girls of the same clan or lineage do not take place. Like the Santal, the Mandi, too, has the custom of marriage outside the clan. According to the descent rules of the Mandi society, the children are considered to belong to the mother's descent group. So the children of two sisters must belong to the same lineage and the same clan. For that reason, the Mandi society prohibits the marriage between *khalato Bhai-Bon* (children of two sisters). In Mandi society, marrying someone from one's own lineage and clan is strictly prohibited. Among some other ethnic groups, there are customs of marrying from within the same lineage and the same clan.

As far as marriage is concerned, there is a similarity among all the minority ethnic groups, and the rule is that no society encourages marriage outside their own society. So it can be said that as greater social groups, the ethnic minority groups of Bangladesh follow the principle of marrying within their respective societies. Marriage outside the family creates social alliance and friendship among different lineages and clans of the same society. Again a sort of cultural solidarity develops through marriage among the members of same ethnic groups which is a key mechanism for social cohesion.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1** : What are the social taboos regarding marriage seen?

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**Task-2** : How does marriage create social solidarity?

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## LESSON- 08: KINDS OF DWELLING PLACES AFTER THE MARRIAGE

There are different cultural norms regarding the patterns of post-marital residences. For example, in the Mandi and Khasi societies, the bridegroom



resides in the house of the bride. On the other hand, in the Chakma and santal society, the bride lives in the house of the bridegroom with her in-laws. So we can see that there are diversities regarding postmarital residences. These are shown in the table below:

<b>Name of the Postmarital residences</b>	<b>Types of Residence</b>	<b>Example of the Ethnic Groups</b>
Patrilocal Residence	The wife resides in the paternal house of her husband with her in-laws.	This system is followed by the majority of the Bangladeshi ethnic groups including the Bangali, Chakma and Marma.
Matrilocal Residence	After marriage, a husband resides in the house of the wife with her parental family and forms the family there.	The Mandi and the Khasi
Ambilocal Residence	The newly married couple has the choice of living with or near the groom's or the bride's family.	Hopi (an ethnic group of American Indian)
Neolocal Residence	The newly married couple establishes their home independent of both sets of relatives.	Observed in the modern and industrialized
Avunculocal Residence	After marriage the new couple resides with the maternal uncle of the groom.	Trobriand society (An island in the Pacific Ocean).

### Exercise

**Task-1:** What is meant by post-marital residence?

**Task-2 :** What are the types of post-marital residence? What are the types of post- marital residences in your society?

## LESSON- 09: FAMILY SYSTEM

Family is the most important unit of social organizations. This is the primary organization of the society. A family is formed through marriage. Its basic objective is to produce and rear up the children. An individual is introduced in the society by his or her family. Generally by family we mean a type of social group. Its members live together and develop their relation through mutual cooperation. Generally a couple and their children live in a small family.

The importance of family in our life is infinite. After its birth, a child is brought up gradually in the family which provides food, treatment, shelter and other supports required for the child. Family teaches us everything including the social values, customs and practice, etiquette and behaviour. In the first two lessons, we discussed how a family forms the foundation of a society. Now we will see how the family structures vary in different cultures.

**Types of Family :** There are different types of families in different societies. Here we will be discussing the types of families considering two special aspects: (1) On the basis of the composition of the family members; and (2) On the basis of descent system.

### (1) TYPES OF FAMILY ON THE BASIS OF COMPOSITION

Types of Family	Characteristics of Family Composition
<b>Single family</b>	A married couple and their children reside in such a family.
<b>Extended and Joint Family</b>	There are more members in such families. Members of three generations can reside in an extended family. Married brothers, their wives and their children may reside in this family along with their parents. Some other relatives can also reside in this family. In an extended family, property is owned jointly and the income and expenditure are also maintained jointly.

### (2) FAMILIES BASED ON THE TYPE OF DESCENT SYSTEM

Basing on the rules of the descent patriarchal and matriarchal families are found :

Types of Family	Characteristics of Family Formation
<b>Patriarchal Family</b>	These families are formed when the wife comes to reside in the house of the husband and lives with her in-laws. Such families are formed on the basis of patrilineal descent. Here the married women came from other descent groups.
<b>Matriarchal Family</b>	In these families, the husband comes to reside in the house of the wife and her relatives. Women of these families live with their parents, children and their sisters. The married brothers are no more the members of such families.

Different family systems are found among different ethnic groups of Bangladesh. For example, the Mandi of Mymensingh region are matriarchal. The children of Mandi families are introduced in the society by their mother's identity. Like the Mandi, the family system of the Khasi of Sylhet is also matriarchal. The woman is the head of the family in these societies. On the other hand, in other societies including that of the Bangali, the family is patriarchal. In these families, males play the dominant role.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Present different types of families in a diagram.

**Task-2 :** How does the family form the foundation of the society?

## LESSON- 10 AND 11: DESCENT AND DESCENT SYSTEM

**Descent:** Descent means the rules that people in different cultures use to determine parenthood and identify ancestry or the successions. The relationship among generations and its continuity with them of other is called the descent system. In other words, determination of our relations with our forefathers is called the descent system. Therefore, we can say that a man generally acquires the membership of descent group by birth only.

Based on our relation with our ancestors, we determine the close and distant relations or relatives. For example, two sons of the same father are sibling brothers. Again own *chachato* (brothers by uncle) brothers and sisters all are the descendants of the same grand-father. Thus the more we go back or count the ancestors or forefathers, the more will increase the numbers of our kins and relatives. We may thus form a group of our close or near relatives only. Again,

if we form another group including both our near and distant relatives, which one would be bigger? Certainly the number of the second group would be greater, isn't it? These small and big groups of our relatives are called lineage clan etc.

The role of these kin groups according to the descent system is very important in our social life. In many societies, descent system plays a very important role in determining who will inherit assets, who will be the next village or society chief, who will play what role in the rights and rituals of the religious functions etc. The descent rules controls who will get whose land and how much. Again, the memberships of different social groups are defined through descent groups. If help is needed in cultivation or building houses, it comes from the descent groups. Very significant is the help of the descent groups at the time of mutual political cooperation or conflict. Who can marry whom or not eligible to marry is also ascertained through the descent system. Besides, at the time of marriage the role of descent groups is important for transfer of wealth between the bridegroom side and that of the bride.

**Kin Groups- Lineage and Clan:** By line or family we mean the identity of our own forefathers directly connected by blood with us. This means all the lineal persons of the oldest person amongst our forefathers whose identity and direct relation with us we know are in the same lineage. Generally relations of former eight to ten generations to the present are the members of the same lineage. The members of the same lineage are considered to be the active social group. Because the members of the same lineage come forward in time of mutual needs, cooperate in cultivation, keep up companionship, and celebrate different functions unitedly etc.

A clan develops with all such members who existed many generations before and whose name we might have heard but our direct relation with them is unknown to us. All of the same clan firmly believe that they are the descendents of the same ancestor or forefather. But they don't know the actual source of relation with that imaginary ancestor.

The ancestor of the clan is generally belief dependent and is someone imaginary. A clan is formed of some lineages. Some clans form an ethnic group. As for example, let us suppose that the name of a boy of the Mru of Bandarban is Duron. His clan is taisang. Like Duron, Manlung too is another taisang. The Duron's father's father is Weilen, who is in relation Manlung's grandfather's father as well. So Duron and Manlung are the members of the same clan. But there are some hundreds of people more who are members of the taisang clan. They are spread over different Mru villages. Duron

does not know all of them, never saw many and does not know the names of many. But like all other taisang, Duron also believes that he is the descendent of the same ancestor. Therefore, all taisang members belong to the same taisang clan.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Show the reasons why the members of a clan are called a social group?

**Task-2 :** Why is clan important in the social life?

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### LESSON- 12: TYPES OF DESCENT

Two types of descent systems are observed among different ethnic groups of Bangladesh. These are: (1) Patriarchal Descent System and (2) Matriarchal Descent System. In the Bangali societies, the sons are known by their father's descent group. On the other hand, in the Mandi culture, children are introduced by the clan identity of their mother. For example, Namita Chiran is a Mandi girl. Her mother's name is Mamata Chiran and father's name is Lipton Marak. Namita's family title is Chiran and that is her mother's clan i.e. she is a member of the Chiran clan. According to the Mandi rules, it is supposed that Namita is connected with all other members of the Chiran clan by blood.

**Patriarchal Descent System:** The majority of the ethnic groups of our country follow the patrilineal rules of descent. Children are known in the society by their father and the father is known by his father. Patrilineal descent refers to the system where a person is identified as the member of his father's descent group. In such societies, the identity of mother or grandmother is not of much significance. According to the patrilineal descent, the *Mamato* (maternal cousin) or *Fufato* (father's sister's children) *Bhai* (brother) or *Bon* (sister) of a person is not the member of his descent group. Except the Mandi and Khasi, all other ethnic groups, such as: the Bangali, Santal, Oraon, Chakma, Marma follow patrilineal descent rules. In such cultures, the children of a woman are not the members of the woman's descent group.

**Matriarchal Descent System:** The matrilineal descent is found among the Mandi and the Khasi. According to this descent system, a person is the member of his or her mother's clan. The clan members identify a woman as their common imaginary ancestor. So the successors of the woman form the matrilineal descent system. According to this custom the children are the members of the descent group of the mother. Therefore, although a man is a member of his mother's descent group, his children are not the members of that clan.

We have already discussed about the Mandi ethnic group as example of matriarchal descent system. Basically, the Mandi live in different regions of Mymensingh and Netrakona districts and in the Shalban area of Madhupur. In their culture, children become the members of the mother's descent group. After their marriage, the males reside with their wives in the wives' houses or nearby areas of the wives' parental family. Their children become the members of the wife's descent group. Both men and women actively participate in economic works i.e. in agricultural activities. As the females inherit the mother's property, the husbands stay in their houses and grow crops in their wives' lands. Under the same rule, a woman's brothers, too, after their marriage live with their wives in other houses or other areas. If the wife is dead due to some reason, then the widower returns to his mother's house. He then resides with his mother or sisters. Among the Khasi of Sylhet, the same descent system is practiced.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1** : Make a table to show the differences between the patrilineal and matriarchal descent systems.

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## LESSON- 13 AND 14: TYPES OF INHERITANCE

As we are the descendents of our ancestors, we are the legal inheritors of the property they had by their social position and ownership. Like membership of the clan, types of property inheritance are determined by the descent rules of a particular culture. Inheritance means our right by birth on the wealth of our ancestors. But then comes the question, if there are many brothers and sisters in a family, then who gets what share of parents' wealth? Different cultures answer to this question in different ways.

At the beginning of human civilization, there was no idea of private ownership or personal wealth. Except some useful objects, all artefacts and items were considered to be the assets of the group. The objects used by a dead man, in many cases, were destroyed as soon as the funeral programme ended. Many changes were brought in human life with the invention of agriculture. The idea of permanent settlement started with agriculture. Gradually, they learned to grow more crops and tame more animals than their needs. The idea of private property began from the surplus of production than the actual needs of the individuals. Thus, private ownerships were established on different wealth. At the same time, transfer of ownership of assets also became an important issue in any culture.

The inheritance system became the important means of transferring ownership of personal properties. The descendents are the owners of the

properties according to the descent rules of that culture. The son, in patriarchal system, and the girl in a matriarchal system are the owners of the family properties. But some variations can also be observed in different cultures. In some cultures wealth is not equally distributed among the inheritors. Among the children, the one having more responsibilities inherits more wealth. So, the inheritance patterns of different ethnic groups are determined in two ways: (1) on the basis of descent rules, and (2) on the basis of responsibilities.

### (1) Inheritance on the basis of Descent Rules

<b>Patrilineal Inheritance :</b>	The male children inherit the father's property in the patrilineal system.
<b>Matrilineal Inheritance :</b>	The female children inherit the mother's property. For example, among the Oraon, the girls have no ownership or right on her father's property. The sons get equal shares of the property after their father's death. But at the time of distribution of property, the girls get one cow each. Among the Khasi, the matrilineal inheritance system is observed. In their society, the girls inherit all the properties of their mother.

### (2) Inheritance on the basis of Responsibilities and Duties

<b>Rights of the elders :</b>	In some cases, the eldest child of the family is considered to inherit the whole property of the family. Because the responsibilities of sustaining everybody of the family depend on him.
<b>Rights of the younger :</b>	According to this rule the youngest child of the family inherits the major share of the properties. Because the parents reside with the youngest one during old age. Among the Khasi and the Mandi of Bangladesh, the rules for the youngest children (daughter) are observed. In these cultures, generally the youngest daughter inherits the dwelling house. Parents stay with the youngest daughter in their old age. Even the youngest daughter performs the funeral ceremony of the parents after their death.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** What is meant by inheritance? How many inheritance patterns are seen in different societies?

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**Task-2** : Present in a table the rules of inheritance among the Mandi, Khasi and Oraon societies.

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### EXERCISES

#### Multiple Choice Questions

**1. Which diagram is used to identify the ancestors?**

- a. Geographical diagram
- b. Kinship Diagram
- c. Geometric Diagram
- d. Social Diagram

**2. Which of the following institutions teaches a man to be responsible?**

- a. Family
- b. Mosque
- c. School
- d. Temple

**3. As the father is the means to get descent group identity among the Bangali and the Oraon, their other ancestors are**

- i. Father and Mother
- ii. Father and Grandfather
- iii. Great Grandfather

Which one of the following is correct?

- a. i
- b. i and ii
- c. ii and iii
- d. i and iii

**4. Which Ethnic people marry out of their circle?**

- a. Santal
- b. Mandi
- c. Khasi
- d. Mro



**Read the following paragraph and answer question no 5 and 6**

Thonoy Mru, his wife and children live in Thonoy's father's place along with his brothers. Mongching Marma's house is nearby. There is a close relationship between these two families.

**5. Thonoy's family is a**

- a. Neolocal family
- b. Nuclear family
- c. Extended family
- d. Matrilineal family

**6. The relationship between the families of Thonoy Mru and Mongching Marma can be called**

- i. Relatives by blood connection
- ii. Affinal relatives
- iii. Fictive relatives

Which one of the following is correct?

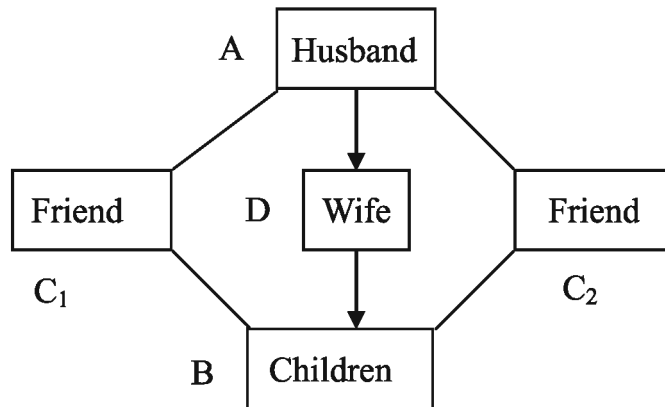
- a. i
- b. ii
- c. iii
- d. i & iii

**Creative Questions**

1. Meenakshi and her sisters along with their respective husbands and children live in the house of their mother -Promita Marak. Their children are brought up with the identity of Promita, although Meenakshi's younger sister was married to another clan. There are several rules and regulations on their property inheritance system.

- a. What is formed with the combination of several clans? 1
- b. Describe the idea of ‘inheritance’. 2
- c. How does Meenakshi’s family maintain the social solidarity of their culture? 3
- d. The Clan identity of Promita’s family is maintained according to their cultural norms.-Give your opinion. 4

2.



**Diagram: Kinship Relations**

- a. Which social institution forms a family? 1
- b. What is meant by social structure? 2
- c. Explain the type of relationship between A and D in the diagram. 3
- d. Analyze the significance of kinship relations between DB and BC shown in the diagram. 4

**3. Rajib and Sajib are classmates. Their respective families are shown in the following table**

<b>Members of Rajib's Family</b>	<b>Members of Sajib's family</b>
Rajib himself	Sajib himself
Father and Mother	Father and Mother
two sisters	uncle and aunt
	one brother and one sister

- a. Which one forms a family? 1
- b. Explain the idea of extended family. 2
- c. Drawing a diagram explain the type of Rajib's family. 3
- d. Do you think that Sajib's family is more supportive for a child's socialization? Give your opinion. 4

## CHAPTER- SIX

### FESTIVALS OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

The minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh observe different festivals. Various colourful festivals are part and parcel of their life and culture. These festivals are the springs of joy and unity in the community life. The festivals are celebrated with much enthusiasm and inspiration. There are some special occasions for organizing these festivals. In this chapter, we will know in details about some of the festivals of the ethnic minorities.



**Fig.6.1: Festivals of minority ethnic groups**

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, we would :

- Know about the festivals of the minority ethnic groups and understand the social importance of observing these festivals;
- Be able to narrate different aspects of the festivals and identify the differences between the festivals observed in the plains and in the hills;
- Be able to prepare a table based on the festivals of the minority ethnic groups from different region;
- Be able to prepare a report of the important festivals observed in our locality.
- Be interested in acquiring more knowledge about the festivals and diversities of the minority ethnic groups;
- Understand and realize the social solidarity and unity that develop through these festivals;

## LESSON- 01: **BOISABI FESTIVAL**

*Boisabi* is the common religio-social festival of several ethnic minorities residing in three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)- Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban of Bangladesh. This festival is arranged on the occasion of the *Choitrasangkranti* (last day of *Choitra*). On the last two days of the month of *Choitra* and the first day of the New Year the *Boishabi* festival is observed. In practice, the term '*Boisabi*' has been coined from the initials of the '*Baisu*' of the Tripura, '*Sangrai*' of Marma and Rakhain and '*Bizu*' of the Chakma and Tanchang and Bishu of Ahamia ethnic groups. This term '*Boisabi*' thus has been formed with the initials of the main festivals of these major different communities of the Chittagong Hill tracts. There is a noble aim behind initiating this festival. That is, the idea of establishing the communal harmony and social unity among different ethnic groups. This integrated festival started in the 1990s with the fervent efforts of some students and pioneering youths of the ethnic minority groups. It is important to know the social context or perspective that motivated the younger generations of the hills to initiate such an effort.

The situation in the hills was quite turbulent and conflicting till Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace accord was signed on 2 December, 1997. During that period, some of the students and the progressive part of the youths came forward. They had discussions with other students and decided to jointly celebrate the main festival of all the minority ethnic groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Together they termed the festival as '*Boisabi*'. With the initiatives of the students of the Rangamati Government College, the festival was observed for the first time in the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Later on, the *Choitrasangkranti* festival had also been included within the '*Boisabi*' in the CHTs. However, each ethnic community celebrates the festival with their respective traditional names and ways. At present, '*Boisabi*' has become the symbol of communal harmony, peace and unity to all ethnic groups. The festive days are observed through the collection of flowers, worshipping in the rivers and temples, decorating houses, morning procession participated by one and all, exchanging greetings, visiting houses in groups, feast and drinking, taking special care of the children and the old, prayer at the temples in the evening, prayers in the temple kindling candles and incenses and praying for welfare of all men and animals of the world. On this occasion, traditional sports and cultural functions are arranged in the villages and towns. Even some socio-cultural organizations arrange week or month-long Boisabi fairs too. In addition to the observance of this festival, a number of publications, CD of music, wall papers, and collections on different topics of socio-culture life

of hill people are published and released by different students' and youth' organizations. Besides drama, traditional narrative opera (*Palagan*), discussion meetings, seminars etc on the life and culture of the ethnic minorities are the additional attractions of the festival.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Discuss the history of the introduction of the *Boisabi* festival in brief. Who introduced this festival and why?

**Task-2 :** Write names of some activities of the 'Boisabi'.

## LESSON- 02: *BAISU* FESTIVAL OF THE TRIPURA ETHNIC GROUP

'*Baisu*' is the main social festival of the Tripura ethnic group. This festival is observed for three days. There are separate names for each of these three days of '*Baisu*'. For example, the first day is named '*hari Baisu*' the second one is called '*Baisuma*' and the third is observed as '*Bisikatal*'. This traditional festival has been observed over the decades to bid farewell the old years and to welcome the new ones.

***Hari Baisu:*** This is the first day of *Baisu* and basically is a preparatory one. The Tripura women make delicious *pitha* (cakes) by pounding *binni* rice. In the Tripura houses, women remain busy for making cakes in houses which continues, more or less, for the next two days. On the day of *Hari Baisu*, morning the Tripura men and women go to the forest very early in the morning to collect banana and *lairu* leaves. Various cakes are prepared using these leaves.

On the day, the Tripura women clean out and decorate the houses. They also wash their casual wears as well. Men and women of all ages wake up very early in the morning to go for collecting flowers, and then they bathe in the river and offer up those collected flowers. They believe that all the calamities and dangers, woes, sorrows and sufferings are washed away by observing this ceremony. '*Garaya*' dance starts from the day of '*Hari Baisu*' and goes on for 5 or 7 days at a stretch. The dancers are called '*garaya cherok*'. They perform the dance in villages with beating trumpets and playing flutes. The owner of



**Fig.6.2: Festive occasion of the Tripura.**

ceremony. '*Garaya*' dance starts from the day of '*Hari Baisu*' and goes on for 5 or 7 days at a stretch. The dancers are called '*garaya cherok*'. They perform the dance in villages with beating trumpets and playing flutes. The owner of

the house takes care and nurtures the cattle on the *Hari Baisu* day. They offer gratitude to the cattle by decorating cattle with flower garland on their neck and on the horns.

**Baisuma:** The day *Baisuma* is very significant to the Tripura people. On this day, no difference or discrimination exists among people. Everybody visits others and empathize with each other. Guests are entertained with different cakes, sweet drinks (*sharbat*), *pachan* etc according to their ability. But slaughtering animal is strictly prohibited on the day of *Baisuma*. In addition to the *garaya* dance, narrative opera and different sports are arranged for the whole day.

**Bisikatal:** This day of *Baisu* is the day of welcoming the New Year. Children and the young people wear new dresses and distribute foods to the hens and chicks and other animals and birds in the houses of the village. According to the social custom, Tripura people receive blessings of the elders by touching their legs (making obeisance). The youth and the newly married couple bathe the elders of the village by fetching clean water from the rivers or wells nearby and receive blessings from them. On this day, they worship and offer prayers wishing welfare for all the family members.

The doors of each and every house are kept open for guests for days and nights. For they believe that if anybody goes back without having any food, the householder will be cursed.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Write the activities of the three days of *Baisu* festival of the Tripura ethnic group according to the table below :

Names of the three parts of <i>Baisu</i>	Description of the Activities
<i>Hari baisu</i>	
<i>Baisuma</i>	
<i>Bisikatal</i>	

### LESSON- 03: SANGRAI FESTIVAL OF THE MARMA AND RAKHAIN ETHNIC GROUPS

The main social festival of the Marma and the Rakhain communities is the *Sangrai* (reception and farewell to the year). This festival is observed on the last two days of the month of *Choitra* and the first day of the New Year

(generally 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> April). This festival is of quite religious significance among the Marma and Rakhain. On the first day of *Sangrai*, everyone including the young children, wash and clean the local Buddhist temple. One and all of the community visit the Buddhist temple, kindle light and pray for the welfare for all the creatures of the world. With much regard and devotion, they offer the ‘*choaing*’ (food) to the Buddhist monks. Besides, the god (idol) are taken in procession from the temple to the nearby river and bathed. At that point, sandalwood and coconut water are also carried along. The Buddhist idols are placed on a decorated bamboo-made-platform. Then the devotees pour sandal and coconut water on the God’s idol. The water thus sprayed is collected by people and preserved. They believe that this water heals diseases. After bathing, the statues are worn new *clothes* and are brought back to the temple in processions. In addition to the lights generally lit on the occasion of worship, they also kindle thousands of lamps on that day.



**Fig. 6.3: The water festival of Marma and Rakhain.**

On the next two days, they also observe the *Sangrai* in a grandiose manner. During these days they remain very busy preparing various delicious foods including *pitha* (cakes). The old are shown respect through worshipping. Splashing *moitri* (friendship) water is a special function of the *Sangrai* festival. For this a huge stage is made in a big open field. Two big boats full of water are kept on the two sides of the stage. Two groups of girls and boys take position on the two sides of the boats. Then they start throwing water from the boat till water finishes. The empty boat is again filled with water. When one group is exhausted, another group replaces the previous and starts the same game. During the traditional water festival, boat race, wrestling (*bolikhela*) etc used to be arranged, in the past.



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**Exercise**

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**Task-1** : Identify the similarities and differences in the observance of the *Choitrasangkranti* or *Boisabi* festival of the Marma and Tripura ethnic groups and put them in the table below:

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	<i>Baisu-</i> the <i>Choitrasangkranti</i> of the Tripura ethnic group	<i>Sangrai-</i> the <i>Choitrasangkranti</i> of the Marma ethnic group
Similarities		
Differences		

#### **LESSON- 04 AND 05: *BIZU* FESTIVAL OF THE CHAKMA ETHNIC GROUP**

*Bizu* is the largest traditional and common festival of the Chakma society. Like the other ethnic groups of the hills, the Chakma also observe this festival with much fervour and inspiration. *Bizu* is observed for three days including the last two days of the last month of the year- *Choitra* and the first day of the Bangla New Year. The elder villagers say that when there were good times in the past, they would observe *Bizu* for at least seven days. The *Bizu* festival is divided into three phases. The first one is the '*Ful Bizu*' while the second one is called '*Mul Bizu*' and the third one is known as the '*Nuobazar*' ( new year) or '*Gojyapojyabizu*' (day to relax and pass idly).

***Ful Bizu:*** In the early morning, children, young boys and girls collect various kinds of flowers from the garden or nearby forest. Then they bathe in the river. They make little boats or vessels with the leaves and decorate those with flowers. The flower-decorated boats are put afloat in the river. Houses, doors and premises are also ornamented with flowers. The Chakma offer flowers to Lord Buddha in the *Kiangi* (the Buddhist temple). Cleaning activities of houses and clothing led by the household head's wife are done on that very day or even before. In the evening, house premises and the *Kiyang* (temple) are lit with candles. At that time, they all pray for the wellbeing of their own relatives and all creatures of the world. In the morning, the children and the teenagers visit the houses of the village and offer rice, paddy, *khoi* (puffed rice), etc to the domestic animals and birds.

**Mul Bizu:** *Mul Bizu* is the most festive and desired day of the three days of the *Bizu*. The house-doors remain open for all known and unknown guests irrespective of their ethnic groups, religion, caste or creed. Guests are entertained with much care and are offered whatever they have at home.

Usually, various types of traditional cakes (*pitha*), different fresh fruits and boiled sweet potatoes are prepared in the morning to entertain the guests. *Pajon*- a delicious assorted dish, is prepared which is a delicacy for this occasion. The word *Pajon*, perhaps, refers to five food items (*panch*-five, *anna* -rice). *Pajon* is prepared with at least five types of vegetables, but everybody tries to increase the types of vegetables in the preparation. This is a very popular item of *Bizu* festival. The adult guests are offered '*jogra*' drinks. Made with *binni* rice, *jogra* is a kind of sweet drink, generally prepared on the occasion of *Bizu*. '*Dachuni*' is another traditional Chakma essential drink served to the visiting close relatives or honorable guests on different social events. In the villages, traditionally, guests are entertained with different traditional cakes including *Sanyapidya*, *Binipidya*, *Binihoga*, *Kalapidya*, *Barpidya*, *Chinipanah* etc and drinks. However, such traditions are rarely found in the cities and towns.

At the noon, young boys and girls bathe the elders fetching pitchers of water from nearby rivers or wells. Buddha's idol in the temple is also given a bath. Bathing this way symbolizes the purification from all evils, impurities and calamities and thus becoming sanctified. In the evening, again the



**Fig. 6.4: Observance of the Bizu festivities.**



**Fig. 6.5: The Bizu festival of the Chakma ethnic group**

Chakma worship Lord Buddha and *Ganjima* (river) by lighting candles. Candles are lit in each and every room of the house, the doors and in the cowsheds. According to the Chakma belief, this removes all ignorance, darkness, miseries, storm and stress of the previous year and brings peace and prosperity in the New Year.

***Nua-bazr* or the *Gojyapojya Bizu*:** This day is observed through different religious rites and rituals. People go to the *Kiyang* (temple) or listen to canonical scriptures (*Mangalsutra*) inviting a monk at home so that the New Year passes well.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Give a description of the activities of three days of the *Bizu* festival of the Chakma ethnic group.

## LESSON- 06 : *CHIASOTPOY* FESTIVAL OF THE MRU ETHNIC GROUP

In the Mru language, '*chia*' means cow and '*sot*' means 'killing with spear (*ballam*)' and '*poy*' means festivity. So the '*Chiasotpoy*' is the 'cow killing ceremony' of the Mru community. This is the prime social event of the Mru ethnic group. Dedicated to the creator *Thurai*, this ceremony is observed with prayers for the recovery from diseases and also for the good harvest and prosperity of the family. Generally this festival is organized between December and February.



**Fig. 6.6: The Chiasatpoy festival of the Mru**

At the start, a bamboo *chhit* (flower) is made and then a scaffold-shaped platform is built in the middle of the village. In the evening of the celebration day, the cow for the purpose is tied up within a fenced enclosure. Young

boys and girls in groups collect banana leaves from the woods on the day before the celebration. The relatives are invited to attend the ceremony at least one week before the function. On the first day, invited guests are entertained. Food items are served on banana leaves.

In the evening, each invited guests, close relatives and the villagers offer a bottle of drink in honour of the host. Being dressed traditionally, Mru young boys and girls perform dance encircling the cow with the music of their traditional flute '*plung*'. In the morning, the household head kills the cow with a sharpened spear, while he utters spells (*mantra*). When the meat is cooked, they all have the food together. In the evening, the boys and girls come to the premise again and perform dance. After nine cycles of dancing around the platform, they end by dancing at the host's residence. The invited guests go back to their houses with beef.

There is a myth regarding the cow killing festival of the Mru ethnic group. Once the creator *Thurai* sent a religious book with the cow which was written in alphabets on the banana leaves for the welfare of the *Mru* ethnic group. In this book, there were prescriptions on cultivation methods, religious rules and regulations, social duties mentioned in the book. It was summer time. Being tired of walking under the scorching heat



**Fig. 6.7: The Chiasatpoy festival of the Mru**

of the sun, the cow fell asleep under the shade of a big banyan tree. It was almost evening when the cow awoke. Being very hungry, the cow ate the book. The *Mru* believe that they have neither a religious book nor alphabets as the cow ate their religious book. Therefore, they arrange the cow killing ceremony every year.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Why do Mru ethnic group arrange the cow killing ceremony every year in the chiasatpoy festival?

## LESSON- 07: ‘SOHRAY’ FESTIVAL OF THE SANTAL ETHNIC GROUP

Traditionally, the *Sohray* festival has been observed by the Santal for long. It is their greatest traditional annual festival. Although the Santal in Bangladesh live under much hardship now, they still observe the *Sohray* festival with same importance. The *Harhapan*'s (Santal) grow crops with tamed animals under the burning sun and heavy rains getting smeared with mud and sweat. So after the harvest, they observe the *Sohray* festival with the relatives and neighbours by worshipping the house gods, gods of clan and forefathers and taking care of the domesticated animals. Along with this, they pray to the gods for good harvest. In a meeting, the day of celebration is fixed up by the villagers and leaders of the village organizations. As soon as the day is set, there is a wave of delight among the villagers. Each and every family cleans up their dwelling houses both inside and outside. They draw figures with red mud on the walls and pillars of the house and also draw colourful motifs (*alpana*) in the yards. Housewives become busy in preparing the traditional drink- '*pachani*' in the pitchers. The family members get new dresses. At the same time, they start inviting the relatives.



**Fig. 6.8: Santal woman in festive dress**

Starting from the day before the 'poushankranti' the festival is observed up to the second week. The festival continues for six days. The first day is called the '*Um*' or purification. The festival starts from the '*Godtandi*' (holy place'). *Nayke* (village priest) conducts the program. The males of the village assemble at *Godtand* where worship takes place with the offerings of chicks and hens, banana, sugar, *batasha* (traditional sweetmeat), incense and vermilion etc to the first parents (*Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi*)- the ancestors of the twelve clans, *Singbonga* (sun god) and *marangburu*. After the worship *handi* is offered in their names. As the Santal believe that mankind is created from eggs, an egg is placed in the place of worship.

The second day of the festival is '*Bonga*'. On this day, depending on their particular clan, they sacrifice swine, sheep, goat, and hens in the names of the gods *Singbonga* (sun god), *Marangburu* (the great god), house god, and the gods of the clan respectively. On the third day, the domesticated animals are tended and praised. *Jagmanjhi* remains responsible to keep the village and *kulhi* cheerful with music and dance and songs all along these three days. So during the *Sohray*, the youths of the village keep playing on the madal (a

kind of tomtom played by the Santal) while the girls sing songs and perform 'Dahar', Lagren, Golwari and Durumjah' dances. The fourth and fifth days are 'Jale' and 'Hakokatkom' respectively. At present, these two days are not observed due to poverty. The sixth day is 'Sakrat' which is now observed on the fourth day. On this day the males take food in neighbouring houses and hunt in jungles nearby the village. In the evening, the boys strike a banana plant by the arrow. This is called 'Bejah Tuing'. This is basically the symbolic action of preventing and annihilating the enemy. After the archery, exhibitions of physical feats and different games and sports are arranged. After these arranged sports, Jagamanjhi carries the winner of the banana plant piercing competition on his shoulders to front of the Than (village alter of worship). There the men and women bow to 'Dababh-Johar' (salute). At that time jagamanjhi concludes all the formalities of shohrai festival and expresses hope for happy return of shohrai in the new year.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Write the different phases of shohrai festival of santal ethnic group.

### LESSON- 08: *KARAM* FESTIVAL OF THE ORAON ETHNIC GROUP

*Karam* is the major festival of the Oraon ethnic group. Generally this festival is observed during the full moon (Purnima) in the month of *Bhadra*. There is a myth associated with the observance of the *Karam*. According to the myth, *Karam* tree is the savior. Once upon a time, the Oraon were attacked by their enemy and they fled to the deep in the forest. There they sought shelter under the *Karam* tree. This tree saved them. They arrange the *Karam* festival in memory of that event



**Fig. 6.9: Karam festival**

During the festival, the Oraon collect the branches of *Karam* tree and plant the branches in the middle of the house yard. Then they worship and perform dances and music encircling these branches of the *Karam* tree. The narrative opera (*palagan*) and stories are also staged here. Usually young boys and girls observe fasting during this festival. The newly married wives visit their parental houses. They fetch baskets full of various gifts, clothing, fruits etc from their father-in-laws' house. For this reason, *Karam* is a festival of unification and pleasure. Sisters remember their brothers through this festival. There is a common proverb in the Oraon society: '*apon Karam bhai ka dharam*'. After the festival

the baskets are sunk in the swamp.

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Explain the characteristics of *Karam* festival.

#### LESSON- 09: WANGALA FESTIVAL OF THE MANDI ETHNIC GROUP

'*Wangala*' is the main social and agricultural festival of the Mandi ethnic group. The Mandi believe that the blessings of gods are necessary for good harvest. Good harvest cannot be attained if gods' blessings are not with them. Even health condition of men can worsen if gods are not satisfied. So the *Wangala* is the main festival observed to accomplish the blessings of the gods and goddesses and expressing thanks and gratitude to them. *Misi Saljong* is the god of fertility, while *Rakshimema* is the mother of harvest and *Susime* is the goddess of wealth and protection of crops. The blessings of all these gods and goddesses are crucial for their survival. The festival *Wangala* is observed in the end of octobar or in the begining of november. Sometimes their festival continues for a week. After harvesting all the crops from the Jum cultivation, Garos observe this festival with entire village or sometimes together with some villages.



**Fig. 6.10: Wangala festival**

According to the Mandi calendar, the *Wangala* festival is observed in the 7<sup>th</sup> (dissension 10<sup>th</sup>) month of '*Mejafang*' before the arrival of the winter. This is the period starting from the second week of October to the second week of November. It is said about the beginning time and ending time of the *Wangala*: "*Wangala* should commence when the hill flower named *Megong* starts blooming in the forest and should be finished as long as the full moon light remains.' After the harvest, *Nakma* calls on the villagers and entertains them in a feast. He thus starts the formal preparation of *Wangala*.

There are three parts in the *Wangala* ceremony. These are: *Rugala*, *Sa-Sat-Sa-Wa* and *Dama Gagata* or '*Jalwatta*' or '*Rusrata*'. The main idea behind *Rugala* is that they perform (worship by chanting hymns) to worship *Rakshimema* and *Rongdik Mitdik* on this day. Then *Nakma* sprinkles little amounts of drinks on new crops, vegetables, cultivation tools and musical instruments kept in the middle of the floor (this activity is called *Rugala*) and offers those to gods and goddesses. So after this program at *Nakma*'s place, this program is performed in each house. On the second day, the '*Sa- Sat -Sa-Wa*

(sacrifice of incense) is observed when offerings are dedicated to *Misi Saljong*. The third days' function is '*Dama Gagata*' or '*Jalwatta*' or '*Rusrata*'. After this function, all musical instruments including *Dama*, *Khram*, *Kal*, *Rong* etc used in the *Wangala* festival are deposited in *Nakma*'s house. Then *Nakma*, in presence of the crowd dedicates wine and incense to *Saljong*, *Mitdey* and the *Rakshimimema* for the last time and bids them farewell after the prayer. Thus the *Wangala* festival comes to an end.



**Fig. 6.11: Wangala festival.**

### Exercise

**Task-1 :** Write the names of several stages of wangala festival of Mandi ethnic group.

## LESSON- 10 : KHASI'S SAD-SUK-MENSIM FESTIVAL

*Sad-Suk Mensim* is a significant traditional festival of the Khasi ethnic group. The meaning of the phrase '*Sad-Suk-Mensim*' is 'the joyful dance of the heart'. This is basically a dancing program.

This festival is observed as part of conveying gratitude or thanks to the God or Creator. This function of the dance is celebrated with expressing endless gratitude to Gods for giving plenty of crops, assets, good health and peace. The priest conducts the prayer to god. This prayer is held to seek blessings of god for the welfare of people. At the time of *Sad-Suk-Mensim* both men and women wear colourful dresses and dance with deep devotion and regard. During the dance, drums (*Ka-Bom*), flutes and pipes ('*Tangmudi*') are played, which multiply the festive mood of the celebration. This function is observed in the month of April every year. This function symbolically represents the



**Fig. 6.12: Sad-Suk Mensim festival of the Khasi ethnic group**



eternal role of creation and fertility. Women play the role of the bearer of seeds and crops, and men play the role of harvester. This function of dance presentation gratitude and love to gods has occupied a special place in the hearts of the Khasi society.

It is more widely observed in the Meghalaya state of India. The Khasi have the largest population in this state. But even outside the Meghalaya, wherever the Khasi people live in Bangladesh or in India, *Sad-Suk-Mensim* has been observed through ages. Their main religious festivals are the Christian festivals now. Most of the Bangladeshi khasi ethnic people converted into christians. Their main religious festivals are the Christian festivals now.

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### Exercise

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**Task-1 :** Make a list of the objectives of the *Sad-Suk Mensim* of the Khasi ethnic group. In which places outside Bangladesh this festival is celebrated?

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**EXERCISES****Multiple Choice Questions****1. What is the specific day for Boishabi festival?**

- a. Last two days of Choitra and the first day of Boishakh
- b. Last day of Choitra and the first day of Boishakh
- c. Last three days of Choitra and the first two days of Boishakh
- d. Last four days of Choitra and the first three days of Boishakh

**2. What is the main social festival of the Tripura ethnic community?**

- a. Bizu
- b. Boishu
- c. Sohrai
- d. Sangrai

**3. Major characteristics of the Karam festival of the Oraon community are**

- i. Usually observed during the Autumn
- ii. Unmarried males and females fast
- iii. Exchange new dresses, fruits and gifts

Which one of the following is correct?

- a. i and ii
- b. i and iii
- c. ii and iii
- d. i, ii and iii

**Read the following paragraph and answer the question no 4 and 5**

Mr Rahman, an industrialist, sacrificed a cow at the Eid Ul Azha. By sacrificing cows, he wanted to satisfy Allah on this occasion.

**4. Which festival is close to festival observed by Mr. Rahman?**

- a. Bishu
- b. Sangrai
- c. Boishu
- d. Bizu

### 5. By observing such festival, ethnic communities

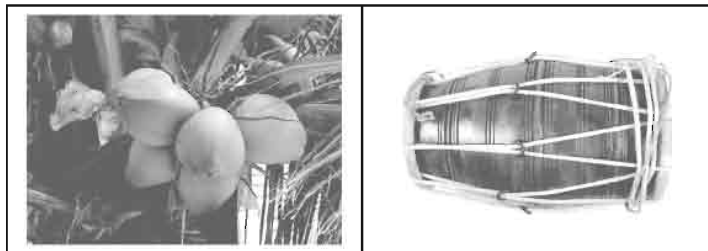
- i. Maintain their cultural traditions
- ii. Invite the new year
- iii. Want to satisfy god

Which one of the following is correct?

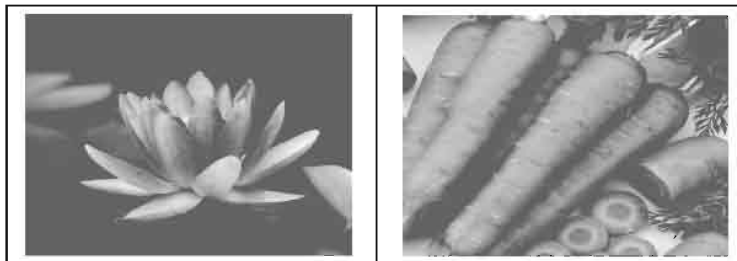
- a. i and ii
- b. i and iii
- c. ii and iii
- d. i, ii and iii

### Creative Questions

1.



**Information- 01: Items Used at the Festival of the 13<sup>th</sup> April**



**Information- 02: Items Used at the Festival of March and April Months**

- a. What is the meaning of 'Chia' in the Mru language? 1
- b. What does it mean by 'Riachaua' in Mru language? 2
- c. Give an account of the festival from information provided in Picture 1. 3
- d. Do you think that the items of picture 2 are used only in Ful Biju festival?-Give reasons for your answer. 4

2. Mushfiq's father had a posting from Rangamati to Dhaka, when Mushfiq was very young. He remembers his friend Chinu having cakes, rice pudding (*payesh*), pajon and fresh fruits while he was having Polao, Korma and sweet items on the occasion of Eid celebration in Dhaka. Visiting his friends' places also reminds him of visiting the rajban Bihar in Rangamati. His younger sister Rima has good memories of the 'harvesting festival' during October-November.

- a. In which state of India, the Khasi are the highest in number? 1
- b. Give an account of main phase of the Sad-Suk-Mensim festival. 2
- c. Describe the festival Rima remembers and its phases. 3
- d. In Mushfiq's memory, the Biju festival is the most prominent one. - describe the validity of the statement. 4

**The end**

**2019**

**Academic Year**

**6-Minority Ethnic**

সমৃদ্ধ বাংলাদেশ গড়ে তোলার জন্য যোগ্যতা অর্জন কর

- মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা

নারী ও শিশু নির্যাতনের ঘটনা ঘটলে প্রতিকার ও প্রতিরোধের জন্য ন্যাশনাল হেল্পলাইন সেন্টারে  
১০৯ নম্বর-এ (টোল ফ্রি, ২৪ ঘণ্টা সার্ভিস) ফোন করুন



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