# Gender and Social Exclusion/Inclusion:

## A Study of Indigenous Women in Bangladesh

By

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# <u>ABBREVIATIONS</u>

Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK)

Analysis of Poverty Trends (APT)

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS)
Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS)

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA)

Capability Approach (CA)

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC)

Cost of Basic Needs (CBN)

Department for International Development (DFID)
Deputy Commissioner (DC)

Direct Calorie Intake (DCI)

European Union (EU)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)

Government of Bangladesh (GoB)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Hill District Councils (HDC)
Hill District Local Government Councils (HDLGC)

Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

Jana Sanghati Samiti (JSS)

London School of Economics (LSE)

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWCA)

Non-government organizations (NGOs)

Parbotto Chottogram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS)

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)

Ready-made garment (RMG)

Regional Council (RC)

Regional District Council (RDC)

Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)

UN Platform for Action (PFA)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Population Fund (UNPF)

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

World Bank (WB)

World Health Organization (WHO)

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# ABSTRACT

One of the major problems in Bangladesh is the difficult relationship between the various ethnic minority communities and the mainstream people and Government. Many international and national development practitioners, scholars and representatives of local government have tried to identify the factors that contribute to this problem. Against this background, the present thesis seeks to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities in relation to wider Bangladeshi society.

Since the nineteenth century, social exclusion and inclusion have been prominent concepts in policy debates across Europe. This thesis discusses the fact that poverty and social exclusion are often seen as closely related, overlapping or even indistinguishable in the existing literature. Thus there are no uncontested definitions of poverty, social exclusion and inclusion, and these concepts remain the subject of definitional disagreements among intellectuals. This research has tried to bring out these concepts in a gender perspective on Bangladesh as a developing country, examining indigenous women's status at the domestic and wider societal levels and recent developments in this. As a result, the research has produced a perspective on gender as a contributory factor to social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

The inductive nature of this study was developed through observation of, and empirical findings on, indigenous women's and other participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences in particular social contexts. The data were collected using qualitative methods. Data analysis was done through the qualitative approaches that are presented by thematic analysis.

The findings of this research indicate that the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially women, need to be addressed in a policy paper, since creating appropriate policy tools would be the best way of spreading – rather than imposing – the basic values and standards necessary to give a sense of inclusion to all the people of Bangladesh. At the same time, this research has highlighted the fact that, though Chakma and Garo indigenous women live in communities with different social structures – patriarchal for Chakma women and matrilineal for Garo women – in practice these two groups share common life experiences. Finally, the findings identify a gap in current government policies which has led to the Garo community being the most excluded of all the CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts) indigenous communities, and the most in need of strategies for development in Bangladesh.

# Introduction

This thesis is about gender and the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh. The thesis focuses particularly on the processes of social exclusion and inclusion as they affect two indigenous communities, especially the women of these communities. The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion have been of major importance for social policy research, debates and theories in most developed countries since the nineteenth century. But this research explains these notions from a gender perspective and in a developing country, Bangladesh.

The first section of this chapter deals with general background information on the country in which the research was conducted, and then the chapter highlights the overall arguments of the thesis with regard to the current status of women in Bangladesh. In addition, it provides background information about indigenous people, especially about the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities, in Bangladesh. Subsequently, the chapter explains the objectives and rationale of this thesis, before finally addressing the overall structure of the thesis.

## 1.1 Background to the study

Bangladesh is a small country of only about 147,570 square kilometers (Population Census, 2009), but its social and cultural life is so diverse that the land has been seen as a paradise by many social scientists. Bangladesh is ranked the eighth most populous country in the world, having 148.5 million people, but occupying only one 3000th part of the world's land space (Mabud, 2008). In a regional context, South Asian countries including Bangladesh comprise one quarter of the world's population, having 1.5 billion people, and contribute 24 per cent to its annual increase of 80 million people (ibid, 2008).

The density of population in Bangladesh was approximately 720 per square kilometer and 843 per square kilometer in 1991 and 2001 respectively. It had increased to 993 per square kilometer by 2009. The ratio of the sexes is 104.8 males to 100 females (Population Census, 2009). The literacy rate, obtained from the 2001 census, was 46.20 per cent for that part of the population aged seven and above. The percentage of Muslims in the population was 89.6, while the percentages of

Hindus, Buddhists and Christians were 9.3, 0.6 and 0.3 respectively (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Bangladesh is well known for the ethnic homogeneity of its population, because over 98 per cent of the people are Bengalis, predominantly Bangla speaking people. However, there are more than 49 ethnic communities that live all over Bangladesh and constitute roughly 2 per cent of the total population. Since there have been no ethnographic surveys of the indigenous people of Bangladesh, it is very difficult to present an accurate count of their number (Biennial Conference of IPRA, 2006). Therefore, Uddin (2006) states that most of the people of Bangladesh belong to one ethnic and linguistic group (Bengali) and share one religious faith.

Poverty in what is now Bangladesh was a subject of interest during the British colonial period (1787-1947) (Jack, 1916; Siddqui, 1982) There was only one piece of research on this issue during the Pakistan period of 1947–71 (Siddiqui, 1982); but poverty began to attract the attention of researchers after the famine of 1974, and the next decade saw a number of studies, mainly devoted to estimating the numbers of poor in the country (Islam, 2004)

According to The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), 'The period between 1963-64 and 1976-77 saw a major surge in poverty. During this period the number of hard-core poor[1] increased from a negligible figure to 45 million, or 60 per cent of the rural population. The hard-core poor made up over 40 percent of the urban population in the middle of the 1970s, although they were rarely found in the early 1960s'. (I.B.R.D. cited in Vylder, 1982, Islam, 2004).

Rahman and Palmer-Jones (2005) state that poverty measurement exercises have generated several sets of poverty indices in Bangladesh. In these exercises, the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) and a number of other surveys have been conducted to produce data on poverty and its determinants. The ratio of those 'on the poverty line' was explicitly expressed during the sixties and early seventies, along with the ratio of those experiencing 'the poverty gap' and 'the squared poverty gap' (see Footnotes 2 & 3). At that point, calorie consumption was identified as a means of defining the poverty line for Bangladesh. However, it was

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[1] Hard-core poor are also known as ultra poor, extreme poor, and absalupe poor or chronically poor (World Bank, 2010). In Bangaldesh, those people falling below the lower poverty line are termed the 'hard-core poor'.

not until the eighties that systematic poverty measurements at regular intervals, based on Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data, were put in place (Rahman and Palmer-Jones, 2005).

The second major data source is the Analysis of Poverty Trends (APT) undertaken by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and, since 1989, by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC). According to the APT, rural poverty (both extreme and moderate) increased between 1987 and 1989-90, and then declined by 1994. Under this programme four comprehensive surveys of poverty in 1,245 rural households in 62 villages in 57 districts (out of 64 districts in Bangladesh) have been conducted in an attempt to capture the multi-dimensional nature of deprivation in rural Bangladesh (Islam, 2004). The unique feature of this study is the use of panel data in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2002). However, this research was initially based on data from the survey of 32 villages with a sample size of 956 households conducted by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in 1987-88. Repeat surveys were conducted in 2000-2001 by the IRRI for a study on the impact of rice research on poverty reduction sponsored by the International Food Policy Research Institute (Hossain et al., 2006). The same households were visited again in 2005 and 2008 for poverty mapping in Bangladesh and for assessing the impact of the rise in food prices on rural livelihoods (Hossain, 2009).

Using the same data, Sen (2003) categorized four types of households: always poor, never poor, ascending households, and descending households. First, the 'always poor' or 'chronic poor' group who remained poor through both periods constituted 31 per cent of the sampled households; second, the 'never poor', who stayed out of poverty through both the periods, represented 25 per cent; third, the 'ascending households' were the ones who escaped from poverty, and these represented 26 per cent of the households; and finally, the 'descending households', who descended into poverty, represented 18 per cent of the sample. The difference of eight per cent between the share of the 'ascending' and the 'descending' households is the net change in poverty during this period. The study again confirms that mobility among the poor and vulnerable is far greater than the net aggregate poverty changes at national level.

The information produced by the Nutritional Surveillance Project of 1990, collected by Helen Keller International Bangladesh in collaboration with the Institute of Public Health Nutrition, is an important data source for the analysis of poverty. The data set represents 15 years of data on the nutrition and health of children and their mothers in Bangladesh. Each year data are obtained from about 90,000 women and children and their households in rural Bangladesh. The study presents a comparative picture of the nutritional status of children in the 'vulnerable' and 'non-vulnerable' groups of households. It has been used to identify the fact that the nutritional status of children is significantly associated with the lean season (between harvests), vulnerability status, diarrhoea, gender and periods of high rice prices (Loganathan et al., 1998)

Apart from these, a number of specific surveys and qualitative studies have been carried out with a view to understanding poverty in specific circumstances and greater depth. For example, 19 reports were published in the Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor study (Islam, 2004) by PROSHIKA. In Bangladesh, poverty is defined and measured by four indicators – food intake, income, capability and consumption (Ahmed, 2004) – and these can be used to measure absolute poverty conditions in Bangladesh.

It can be argued that Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world. It is ranked 129th out of 169 countries according to the human development index prepared by UNDP in 2010, although in the year 2005 (report published in 2007-2008) its position was 140 out of 177 countries. The per capita GDP was US$ 441 and 621 in the years 2004-05 and 2008-09 respectively. However, Bangladesh has been striving hard, with multiple interventions, to overcome the poverty that chokes the life of approximately 55 million poor people, over one third of the total population.

Based on a poverty line set at less than US$1 per day per person, 29 per cent of the population are found to be poor, whereas the percentage increases to 78 if the poverty line is raised to include those who have less than US$2 per day per person (UNDP, 2003, p.158). In terms of calorie intake, 44.3 per cent of the rural population and 52.5 per cent of the urban population are poor, while 18.7 per cent and 25 per cent of the rural and urban populations respectively are hard-core poor (BBS, 2002).

There are two methods which have been used to define the poverty line by recent poverty estimates in Bangladesh. These are based on direct calorie intake (DCI)

norms and the cost of basic needs (CBN). The following table represent the trends in poverty using the CBN method, as it estimates the poverty line at the level of per capita expenditure at which members of households can be expected to meet their basic needs.

**Table 1.1 Trends of poverty measured by CBN**

|  | Upper Poverty Line | | | Lower Poverty Line | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | **1991-92** | **2000** | **2005** | **1991-92** | **2000** | **2005** |
| Headcount Rate (P$_0$) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| National | 58.8 | 48.9 | 40.0 | 42.7 | 34.3 | 25.1 |
| Urban | 44.9 | 35.2 | 28.4 | 23.3 | 19.9 | 14.6 |
| Rural | 61.2 | 52.3 | 43.8 | 46.0 | 37.9 | 28.6 |
| Poverty Gap (P$_1$)$^2$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| National | 17.2 | 12.9 | 9.0 | 10.7 | 7.3 | 4.6 |
| Urban | 12.0 | 9.5 | 6.5 | 4.9 | 3.8 | 2.6 |
| Rural | 18.1 | 13.8 | 9.8 | 11.7 | 8.2 | 5.3 |
| Squared Poverty Gap(P$_2$)$^3$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| National | 6.8 | 4.6 | 2.9 | 3.9 | 2.3 | 1.3 |
| Urban | 4.4 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 0.7 |
| Rural | 7.2 | 4.9 | 3.1 | 4.3 | 2.6 | 1.5 |

**Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1991-92, 2000 & 2005 and ADB, 2006.**

The base year for the CBN poverty line was 1991-92, and it was then updated for 1995-96, 2000 and 2005 to take account of changes in the cost of living using a price index. Poverty headcount rates based on both upper and lower poverty lines using the CBN method show that the proportion of poor in the population declined considerably between 1991-92 and 2000. Headcount rates based on both the upper and lower poverty lines show poverty in Bangladesh to have declined considerably during the 1990s (Table 1.1). In 2005, 40 percent of Bangladesh's population was poor (as measured by the upper poverty line) as compared to 58.8 per cent in 1991-92. Similarly, 25.1 per cent of the country's population was very poor (i.e. below the lower poverty line) in 2005 as compared to 42.7 percent in 1991-92. The percentage decline in the poverty rate was higher in urban areas (24 per cent) than rural areas

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[2] *Poverty gap* measures the average distance of the poverty line from the household below the poverty line. It measures the depth of poverty  (Poverty monitoring survey, 2004, p.13)

[3] *Squared poverty gap* measures the severity of the poverty among household where the poorest of the poor households gets the highest weight (Poverty monitoring survey, 2004, p.13)

(19 per cent). The percentage of the population under the lower poverty line, that is living in extreme poverty (BBS, 2002), declined by 27 per cent at the national level. The percentage of the population defined as extremely poor (per capita consumption below the lower poverty line) was 25.1 per cent in 2005 as compared to 34 per cent in 2000. It was found that the extreme poverty rate declined by 27 per cent in urban areas and 25 per cent in rural areas.

The poverty gap (depth of poverty) and squared poverty gap (severity of poverty) had also declined in 2005 as compared with 2000. Using the upper poverty line, the poverty gap was estimated at 9.0 per cent in 2005, recording a 3.8 percentage point reduction since 2000. Similarly, the squared poverty gap declined to 2.9 per cent in 2005 from 4.6 per cent in 2000. The substantial falls in the poverty gap and squared poverty gap indicate that the consumption of those below the (upper) poverty line improved considerably. Moreover, these improvements have occurred at similar rates for the urban and rural poor populations.

Islam (2004) states that poverty in Bangladesh declined by about one per cent per year (Rahman, 2002) or at best 1.8 per cent (GoB, 2002) during the 1990s, which is an extremely slow improvement. The decrease was equally slow in the case of hard-core poverty. The decline in absolute poverty was accompanied by an increase in relative poverty. The BBS data show that inequality rose during 1990s, but at a higher rate in urban areas than in the countryside (Islam, 2004).

**Figure 1.1: Poverty trends in Bangladesh: 1983-2000**
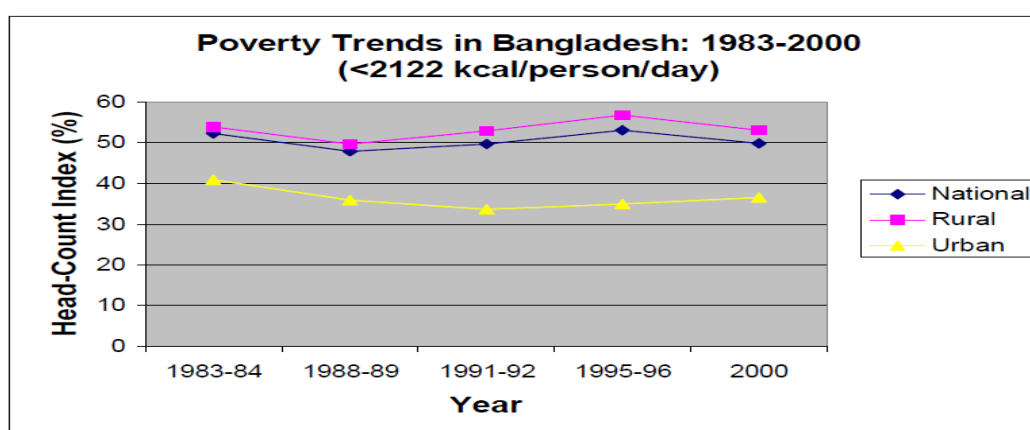


**Source:  Adapted from Sen 2003; BBS, 2002.**

Based on a poverty line set at a direct calorie intake (DCI) of less than 2,122 kcal per person per day, it was found that that 44.3 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh, or 55.9 million people, were 'absolute' poor in 2002; the corresponding figure for rural areas was 42.3 per cent or 42.6 million (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p.38). In Bangladesh 'absolute poverty' is defined as an average intake of less than 2,122 kcal per capita per day, whilst 'hard-core poverty' refers to an average below 1,805 kcal per capita per day.

Using these measurements, a regional comparison suggests that the pace of poverty reduction in Bangladesh has been among the highest in the region in the recent past. The average annual percentage rate of poverty reduction in Bangladesh over the period 2000 to 2005 was second only to that for India among all South Asian countries for which data was available over (roughly) comparable periods.

Given these statistics, the issue of poverty as a whole is high on the agenda in any social policy research in Bangladesh, but the nature and extent of poverty can be diverse. Therefore, de Haan (1997) argues that the current debate on poverty, especially in developing countries, is concerned with wider concepts of relative deprivation, vulnerability and capability. According to the Human Development Report for 2003, poverty is increasing despite overall economic growth. Absolute poverty is more abject in the developing world. A large section of the population in Asia, Africa and some East European countries is significantly disadvantaged economically (HDR, 2003). As this research has dealt with gender and social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh, therefore, it enables not only the debate of gender perspective in relation to poverty but also offers the policy paradigm of women inclusion in development of Bangladesh. For this reason, the following section highlights the general condition of women, and then particularly highlights the indigenous population, especially indigenous women's condition in Bangladesh. In addition, this section will be justified why I have chosen these two particular communities for this research.

### 1.1.1 Women in Bangladesh

According to the Population Census (2009), about 49 per cent (71.6 million) of the total population (146.6 million) of Bangladesh are women. However, although women constitute half of the population of the country, it can be argued that their

importance and potential role in the social and economic development of the country has been either by-passed or ignored. Bangladesh is a patriarchal society, and this has been addressed in many exciting pieces of literature (Papanek, 1973; Boserup, 1982; Kabeer, 1988/2001). Cain, Khanam, and Nahar (1979) and Lindenbaum (1981) argue that the patrilineal, patrilocal, male dominated, rural, social characteristics of most of Bangladesh mean that women are a subjugated 'weaker' sex, with no independent claim to property, no link to the formal labour market, and little real household decision-making power.  Goetz argues that Bangladeshi women are seen as 'silent and passive victims' of patriarchy, which contributes to a description of their situation as 'among the least negotiable in the world' (Goetz, 1992, p.12).

More recently, Islam and Sultana (2006) argue that the traditional society of Bangladesh is permeated with patriarchal values and norms of female subordination, subservience, subjugation and segregation. This results in discrimination against women from birth, leading to them being deprived of access to all the opportunities and benefits of family and societal life, thus putting them in a most disadvantageous position. In this regard, Islam and Sultana state that:

> *Women are vulnerable in every sector in Bangladesh. They also lack access to justice on human rights, because of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and social and economic class distribution. In a word, women are discriminated against from home to parliament in Bangladesh* (Islam and Sultana, 2006, p.56).

However, over the last two decades, the role of women in Bangladesh has been changing significantly. For example

> *… [since] the First World Conference on Women in Mexico (1975), gender issues have increasingly become a predominant theme of the worldwide development discourse. Bangladesh was one of the first developing countries to establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs, in 1978, three years after the Mexico Conference. …The Government has already prepared a National Policy for the Advancement of Women and made some noteworthy progress in implementing a National Action Plan prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA)* (Asian Development Bank, 2001, p.1).

As a result, women's current participation in the country's economic sector is visible in both the formal and the informal sectors; although the majority of rural women are involved in the informal sector, in activities such as poultry rearing, agriculture, horticulture, food processing, cane and bamboo work, silk spinning, handloom weaving, garment making, fish-net making, handicrafts and other home production (Baden et al., 1994). Within the formal sector, a large number of women work in export-oriented industries, for example in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry, where women make up over 90 per cent of the 1.5 million workforce that currently brings in approximately 70 per cent of the country's foreign currency earnings[4], though 'a number of women also work as teachers, lawyers, journalists, government employees, and for non-government organizations (NGOs), where their activities are contributing to the transformation of the traditional values and gender roles of Bangladeshi women and enhancing the earnings of many families in Bangladesh' (ADB, 2001).

At the same time, Jahan (1994) states that violence against women is a persistent and visible social problem in Bangladesh. Sebstad and Cohen (2000) argue that most aspects of women's lives, particularly their freedom of choice, decision-making power and access to resources, are controlled by the norms of patriarchal society.

Given the general facts about women in Bangladesh, it is not surprising that poverty and social exclusion are particularly predominant in rural areas. Linked with poverty and social exclusion are women's vulnerable position at the domestic level and the policy gaps which affect them at state level. Against this background, this research highlights the problems of ethnic groups, especially the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities, in relation to gender and social exclusion and inclusion arguments in contemporary social policy debates.

### 1.1.2  Defining indigenous people in Bangladesh

Minorities are those groups of people who, for one reason or another, have become the first victims of the discriminatory and exclusionary processes of the state or the community. Bangladeshi laws and policy documents use several terms, such as

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[4] BGMEA cited in Centre for Policy Dialogue (2001) *Bangladesh Facing the Challenges of Globalization: A review of Bangladesh's Development*, p. 322.

'indigenous people', 'aboriginals', 'ethnic minority groups', '*adivasi*', '*pahari*', '*upajati*', '*jhumma*' and 'the scheduled tribes' to refer to these people.

A look at some historical documents shows that the East Bengal State Acquisitions and Tenancy Act of 1950 uses the term 'aboriginal tribes and castes', while the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 refers to 'indigenous hillmen' or 'indigenous tribes' (Roy, 2007, p.103). Similarly, the term '*upajati*' (meaning tribe in Bengali) was used in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Act of 1998. More recently, the Parliamentary Special Committee in Bangladesh describes these people as 'tribes' or 'small ethnic groups' (New Age, 9 June 2011).

It has been argued that, '*The Government of Bangladesh does not recognize ethnic minorities as indigenous or Adivasi; rather, it describes them as a tribe…*' (Dewan, 2007, p.131). However, most of the literatures recognize ethnic minorities as indigenous (Roy, 2005; Costa, 2005; Halim, 2002, 2003, 2004) or *Adivasi* (Halim, 2005, 2008 and Roy, 2007). Therefore, the most recent national strategy documents, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP, 2005), use the term '*Adivasi*/Ethnic Minority people'. Samad (1998) argues that:

> *The debate continues as to whether the ethnic minorities are Adivasis or migrants. Most Bangladeshis believe that the ethnic minorities are migrants and not 'Bhumiputra' (sons of the soil).*

The two separate terms 'indigenous peoples' and 'tribal peoples' are used by the ILO because there are tribal peoples who are not indigenous in the literal sense to the countries in which they live, but who nevertheless live in a similar situation to those people who are. Article 1 of ILO Convention No. 169 contains a statement that covers these people rather than defines them, indicating that the Convention applies to:

> *a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;*

> *b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or*

*a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.*

Bal (2000) argues that Garo people may prefer to be called tribal people, a description which was first introduced into the Indian sub-continent by the British Colonial administration (Bal, 2000). In the early 1980s, the first internal World Bank (WB) policy guidelines on dam projects, timber plantations and other forestry related projects used the term 'tribal'; though in a revised policy paper the World Bank used the term 'indigenous' (Bleie and Bikash, 2008). According to World Bank Operational Directive 4.20:

*The terms 'indigenous peoples' or 'indigenous ethnic minorities', 'tribal groups' and 'scheduled tribes' describe social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process. For the purposes of this directive, 'indigenous people' is the term that will be used to refer to these groups.*[5]

Among the diverse identities of peoples in Bangladesh, this research draws attention to the collective and individual identities of Chakma and Garo people (see Chapter 6).

According to the Government census of 2001, there were approximately 632,216 indigenous people (divided among 45 distinct ethnic groups) in Bangladesh, of which 43.7 per cent were estimated to be Buddhist, 24.1 per cent Hindu, 13.2 per cent Christian and 19 per cent were classified as 'others'. But some argue that this figure has been deliberately kept low in order to show the marginality of the indigenous people. Some people claim that the number of both plains and hill tracts indigenous people could be significantly higher (Uddin, 2006). The majority of these people live in the Chittagong Hills Tracts (CHT) and in the regions of Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Rajshahi. Almost all of the tribal population lives in rural areas and is involved in agricultural work. Uddin, (2006) states that

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[5] World Bank, Implementation of Operational Directive 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples: An Independent Desk Review, Operations Evaluation Department, January 19, 2003. Report No. 25332.

> *… Indigenous people (tribal people) have their own language, alphabets, numbers, culture, religion and civilization. The economic and agricultural activities of the indigenous people of the hill areas are different from the economic and agricultural activities of the Bengali and plains indigenous people. The economic activities of the indigenous people living in the plains are similar to those of the Bangla speaking people.*

In this study, I have attempted to investigate two indigenous communities in Bangladesh: the Chakma community and the Garo community. The Chakma and Garo communities are two of the largest and ancient ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh; and they have striking differences from mainstream society. The following sections highlight the overall background of the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

**The Chakma community**

The Chakmas are the largest ethnic group in Bangladesh. Though their name is written as Chakma in Bangla, they never use the term when introducing themselves, or within their own community, or in dealing with other indigenous communities. Chakma (2007) stated that they call themselves *Changma*, though other indigenous communities, such as the Rakhains, called them *Sak*, *Thak* or *Thek* and the Tripuras called them Kurmu, and so on.

Nothing specific is known about the ancient history of the Chakmas. The Chakmas themselves believe their origins lie in the ancient Kingdom of Kalap Nagar in the Himalyan mountains, which is possibly part of the present Nepal. The Chakmas also believe that their ancestral home was at Champaknagar or Champanagar (Chakma, 2007, pp. 38-39). In her paper, Chakma (2007) recounts that "the King of Champaknagar had two sons. The elder son was called Bijoygiri and the younger one was Samargiri. As the elder son, Bijoygiri was the Prince of Champaaknarar. During his father's lifetime, he left Champaknagar and went towards the South, where he conquered many countries, such as those of the Tripuris, the Arakanese and the Kukis. Then, when he was returning home, he heard that his old father had died, and in his absence his younger brother, Samargiri, had become the King of Champaknagar. Bijoygiri was seriously upset at this news, but he settled in a newly conquered country named Sapreikul. Here, Bijoygiri and his followers married local

women, became the rulers of the Arakanese, and lived on the banks of the Naaf River. The Chakmas later migrated to what are now known as the Hill Tracts through the valleys of the Matamuhuri and Karnafuly rivers".  Whether or not this legend is true, the Chakma community did not originally belong to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It has its roots in India and it migrated to Bangladesh at the time of India-Pakistan partition in 1948. According to Sir Herbert Risley (1891), the Chakmas are an off-shoot of the *Task* or *Tesk* tribe of Arakan. Lewin (1869, p.46) mentions that the name Chakma is given to this tribe in general by the inhabitants of the Chittagong District, and that the largest and most dominant section of the tribe recognizes *Burmese*, *Thek* as the correct way to describe them*.*

Singh (1985) argues that, 'The root of the crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is that the Bangladeshi regime wants the land of the CHT to belong only to its co-religionists and not to indigenous people who are ethnically, religiously and culturally different from the majority community of Bangladesh'.

More than 430,000 Chakma people live in Bangladesh and the adjoining areas of northeast India. According to Adnan (2004), the total Chakma population is 239,417, and this population is concentrated in the Chittagong Hills area in the southeast of Bangladesh, including Chittagong City. However, there were Chakma people living elsewhere at the time of the census. For example, the Chakmas living in the protected forest regions of Teknaf in the district of Cox's *Bazar* were not included in that census. However, more than 90 per cent of the Chakma people live in the Rangamati and Khagrachari districts of Bangladesh (Roy et al., 2008).

In the view of anthropologists, the Chakmas are Mongoloid people. According to Risely (1891), the Chakmas have 84.5 per cent Mongoloid characteristics in their bodily features. They are round-faced and thin-lipped. Their hair is straight and black, their eyes are black, and their moustaches and beards are sparse. Their bodies are almost hairless, and they are of medium build.

The Chakmas are mostly Buddhists. Officially they follow the Southern, or Theravada, form of Buddhism. On the other hand, in their beliefs concerning deities they bear marked traces of Hinduism. According to Risley (1891), the Chakmas were once animists, as were the Hindus of the early periods. Worship of stones and trees is still to be found among the scheduled castes of the Hindus, and is found among

the Chakmas too. It has been noted that almost every Chakma village has a Buddhist temple *(kaang).*

However there are arguments put forward by experts such as Sir Herbert Risley (1891) and Chakma (2007) that the Chakma people have experienced a distinct Muslim influence on their social norms, conventions, and language and in their system of nomenclature. They may not be Mughal descendants, but they were doubtless connected with the *Tsak* or *Tsek,* the corrupted form of *Shaikh* or *Sheikh*, of the Muslims of Burma. But the Chakmas themselves would wholly reject these suggestions. Their explanation for the Muslim nomenclature and Muslim influence is different. According to their local folk stories, 'In past, one of the Chakma kings fell in love with the daughter of a Muslim Nawab and married her. This Chakma king borrowed many Islamic customs from his wife. This led to the manifest influence of the Muslims on the Chakma nomenclature, titles, customs and rituals' (Chakma, 2007).

**The Garo community**

The Garo community can be considered a distinct, indigenous community in Bangladesh. It is difficult to present an accurate picture of the origins and ancestral home of the Garos. According to an ethnologist, the vast territory that the Garos once inhabited is known to have been home to Tibeto-Burmese people of the Monogoloid race in the *Bodo* group, which belongs in the heart of Asia (Jengcham, 2007). The ancestors of the Garos inhabited a Himalayan province of Tibet, which drifted gradually into Eastern India and Burma (at present Myanmar). This movement may have started as early 1000 B.C., and it is believed that the Garos settled in this area during the pre-historic age. Chakraborty and Ali (2009, p.46) state that, 'Garos descended from the north west bank of Koknar Lake in the north western Chinese province of Chinghai some three to five thousand years ago and first settled in the Tura province of Tibet and in the Nakalbari area of Bhutan'.

Thus it would seem that the Garo community has its roots in the south west of China and the west of Tibet, and that it moved to Cooch Bihar, Asam and Bengal, and especially to the north eastern region of the Indian subcontinent, a thousand years ago.

The Garo people live in the Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Netrokono and Tangail districts of Bangladesh. Garos can be found in some parts of the greater Sylhet district and in the capital city of Dhaka as well (Burling, 1968, cited in Jennings, 2005). Garo people are also found in some parts of India such as Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Ceylon, which have become identified as the international border between India and Pakistan. After the Indo-Pak border segregation of 1947, Garo land was basically divided into two realms. Almost all of the Garo hill lands were absorbed into Indian Territory. Thus, the almost 40,000 Garos of the northern portion of the Mymensingh district (part of East Pakistan before 1971) were separated from the Garos of India by the newly established international border. In this way the Garo people became a part of East Pakistan (which after 1971 became Bangladesh) and they settled down in the border areas of Bangladesh, especially in areas which had been associated with the Indian state of Meghalaya (see the map in Appendix 1) for thousands of years.

There are no accurate statistics concerning the Garo people in Bangladesh. Jengcham (2007) states that according to estimates by Christian institutions and NGOs, at present nearly eight million Garo people are found in the world as a whole. According to the Bangladesh population census of 2001, there are 96,860 Garos in Bangladesh, though this number is widely believed to be a low approximation. Catholic priest and Garo expert, Father Eugene Homrich, estimates that there are 150,000 Garos presently living in Bangladesh. Another study suggests that at present there are approximately half a million Garo people around the world, of whom about one-fifth live in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2007)

According to Jengcham (2007), in the past, the Garo people followed the religion known as *Sangsarek*, which has its roots in agricultural activities. The *Sangsarek* religion is generally described as similar to animism, which is associated with *mantra-tantra* (magic). The Garo people's traditional religion was not concerned with worshiping idols, and they did not believe in sin and virtue, gods and goddesses, heaven and hell. They usually prayed for the fertility of the soil, safety in the hills, and the protection of their lands from evil spirits and themselves from diseases or epidemics. After death, the Garo made various vows before and after the funeral rituals so that the soul of the dead person could not do them any harm. Major A. Playfair observed that:

> *Like all animistic religions, that of the Garos consists of the belief in a multitude of beneficent and malevolent spirits. To some it attributes the creation of the of natural phenomena; and the destinies of man from birth to death are governed by a host of divinities whose anger must be appeased by sacrifice, and whose good offices must be entreated in like manner* (Playfair, 1909, p.102).

However, at present, almost 99 per cent of Garos have been converted to Christianity (Bal, 2000) – a conversion in which Christian missionaries played a significant role.

### 1.1.3 Defining indigenous women in Bangladesh

Indigenous people, especially women, often find themselves among the poorest of the poor. They face discrimination in education, heath, employment and civil rights. Guharhakurta and Begum (1995) state that:

> *Adivasi [indigenous] women are broadly subject to three kinds of unequal treatment: as members of a patriarchal family, as members of a patriarchal society, and as members of a patriarchal state and nation* (Guharhakurta and Begum, 1995 cited in Halim, 2008, p.74).

Similarly, Halim argues that:

> *In Bangladesh, indigenous women remain among the poorest, most violated, most oppressed, most scorned and most exploited sectors of society* (Halim, 2005, p.69).

This research is particularly interested in Chakma and Garo indigenous people, especially women, with regard to the distinctive features of their society, such as their largest indigenous identity (Chakma community); and ancient and matrilineal or matrilocal (Garo community) practices. Subsequently, Chakma and Garo indigenous women were chosen as opposed to nature of exclusion and inclusion in a patriarchal and matrilineal society in Bangladesh. I believed that Garo women (matriarchal or matrilocal?) may experience double discrimination as a Garo indigenous women, because of their having 'matrilileal' identity in a patriarchal mainstream society. However, both community women may experience exclusion as part of a minority group, for example, but men may be dominant in their relationship with women within

that minority culture (Sibley, 1995: x).In addition, it investigates the extent to which Chakma and Garo people are integrated into mainstream society in comparison with other indigenous communities in Bangladesh. This subject is elaborated on in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 4) of the thesis.

### Chakma women in Bangladesh

The Chakma community is divided into many *gojas* or clans. They owe the name of their tribe to their origin on the father's side, and the name of their clan derives from its place of settlement or from some heroic deed of an ancient tribesman (Satter, 1971). Captain T. H. Lewin (1869) stated that, 'Over each *goza* [clan] there is a *diwan* or headman, who represents the head of the family from which the clan originally sprang'. This indicates that the structure of the Chakma community puts it in the category of patriarchal ideologies.

Roy (2006) argues that not only are Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) women deprived of their inheritance in terms of land, but their livelihood, which is based on the traditional economy, is more adversely affected than that of indigenous men because women are the *de facto* managers of the household. When they lose access to common land due to illegal encroachment by Bengali settlers, dam construction, logging, commercial plantation and various energy projects, they become displaced from their ancestral territory (Roy, 2006). This means that Chakma women are likely to face discrimination at the domestic and wider societal levels in relation to the multiple dimensions of social exclusion and inclusion, and this problem is discussed with the support of empirical evidence in the later data analysis chapters of this thesis.

### Garo women in Bangladesh

> … *Garo people have a matrilineal social system in which the land and name passes to the chosen nokna or heir of the family. This is always a woman.. The Garo tribe gives all rights of property to the women. When a woman is ready to marry, she chooses a man, and if he is an appropriate match her parents commence to arrange the wedding. It is the groom who moves into the bride's house and lives with her and only with the permission of the wife can he act as a mere administrator of the real estate. All real property and possessions automatically belong to the woman. Garo law does not allow*

*men to own ancestral property and so they cannot sell anything without the permission of the wife's side of the family* (Burling, 1968 cited in Jennings, 2005, p.4).

Khan (2004) states that the most remarkable thing about the Garo community is the level of empowerment of women. Those Garo women who live in Dhaka (the capital city of Bangladesh) work in houses, garment factories, or beauty parlours. This means that Garo women are more likely to integrate into mainstream society than Garo men. On this topic, Daring (2005) says that, 'While the Muslim culture is strongly patriarchal, advocating that women stay at home and be submissive to their husbands, the Garo is matrilineal, and women are used to having an equal say in all aspects of their life and home together'.

These researchers suggest that Garo women occupy an important position in their society, playing a significant role in the labour force and in familial decision-making. They enjoy an autonomy which is equivalent to that enjoyed by men in their society. They are by most definitions relatively high in status (Oppong, 1980). However, this thesis rejects this argument and explains how Garo women tend to be excluded despite their matrilineal values at both the domestic level and that of mainstream society.

## 1.2 Rationale of the research

Gender relations affect all aspects of poverty, including income, opportunity, security and empowerment (World Bank, 2001; Narayan et al., 2000), thus acting as both cause and characteristic of poverty. Arguments about the feminization of poverty have helped to bring out the nexus between gender and poverty in terms of its extent, incidence and trends (Jackson, 1998; Cagatay, 1998; Budowski, 2003), with female-headed households having a higher incidence of poverty compared to male headed ones, and an incidence of poverty that may be increasing as time goes on (Lanjouw and Stern, 1991; Jackson, 1998). In recent years feminist critiques have begun to question and challenge 'gender blindness' and to argue that a focus upon the differences between men and women in research and policy analysis would reveal that the poverty suffered by women is quite different from that suffered by men and is linked to gender roles.

Although researchers have conducted a number of studies of minority communities, these have not focused on gender issues in relation to poverty and social exclusion in Bangladesh. Therefore, this research investigates the gender dynamics of poverty and social exclusion among the women of the Chakma and the Garo communities, who represent, respectively, patriarchal and matrilineal society in Bangladesh.

The above background to the study suggests that Chakma and Garo indigenous women are likely to be discriminated against both inside and outside the home. Indeed, the nature and extent of deprivation is diverse and is the result of various structural constraints. In this context, this research seeks to develop knowledge and understanding of the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous communities, especially of the women of the Chakma and Garo communities, in Bangladesh.

Apart from this, the research highlights the policy gap in current government policies which do not directly include all marginalized indigenous groups within their strategies for development in Bangladesh (see Chapter 9). For this reason, I believe that the findings and analysis of this research may be useful for policy development processes in Bangladesh. And it may build a path for a future researcher to conduct further research on social exclusion from a gender perspective in Bangladesh.

## 1.3 Aim of the study

The overall aim of this study is to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities in the context of wider Bangladeshi society.

**Specific aims:**

- To identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in patriarchal (the Chakma community) and matrilineal (the Garo community) society in Bangladesh

- To examine how social exclusion and inclusion influence indigenous women's personal, socio-cultural, economic and political life within their own communities and mainstream society in Bangladesh.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

The background, rationale and aim of this thesis have now been explained, and the rest of the thesis is divided into eight chapters. In <u>Chapter 2</u>, there is an explanation of various theoretical arguments concerning gender and patriarchy in relation to changing form of gender development and gender regimes. The argument put forward here is that the position of indigenous women is likely to be influenced by the multiple dimensions of patriarchy, both at the domestic and the wider societal level.

In <u>Chapter 3</u>, various definitions of poverty and social exclusion are discussed in the context of the historical development of these notions. In addition, the key issues of poverty and social exclusion in Bangladesh are highlighted. As regards this discussion, the argument is put forward that the concepts of social exclusion and poverty are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted and the processes of social exclusion and inclusion among indigenous communities, especially indigenous women, in Bangladesh can be identified in relation to the core aspects of the capability approach (Amartya Sen) and poverty dynamics.

<u>Chapter 4</u> outlines the research questions and methodology used for this research. Here, the methods, techniques and analytical framework chosen for the research are justified. Subsequently, an argument is put forward about the ontological perspective (constructionism) and the epistemological perspective (interpretivism) that inform this approach, along with the ethical considerations of the thesis.

In <u>Chapters 5 to 8</u>, the findings of the research and the analysis of these are presented, in order to illuminate the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially women, in Bangladesh. These findings cover the role of marriage and socio-cultural life in Chapter 5; education, health and identity in Chapter 6; political aspects in Chapter 7; and economic aspects in Chapter 8.

Finally, <u>in Chapter 9</u>, the conclusions drawn from the research are presented. The thesis will have revealed the structural barriers that cause the social exclusion and inclusion of women, demonstrating the extent to which indigenous women are excluded and the lack of opportunity they have to overcome this exclusion. Thus the research indicates that these women cannot increase their capabilities and bring about individual and community well-being. At the same time, the relevance of notions of social exclusion and inclusion to current poverty and policy research in

Bangladesh is argued, and some issues are recommended for future research and for consideration in the formation of government policies to promote more effective inclusionary processes in Bangladesh.

# Gender and Patriarchy

## 2.1 Introduction

Women's development is a global concern in this new millennium. In this respect, gender mainstreaming has been approached as a key requirement in the social inclusion process and gender equality policies of many developed and developing countries. The First World Conference on Women in Mexico (1975) identified gender issues such as equality, integration and the full participation of women in the development of first world countries, and since then these have become an increasingly predominant theme in worldwide development discourse. However, it could be argued that the most comprehensive global policy has been created for women by the United Nations, through the Beijing Platform for Action, in 1995. This acknowledged substantive issues for women's empowerment and equality that needed to be addressed if women were to contribute to a country's sustainable development. It dealt with removing the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of life – for example, economic, social, cultural and political – by giving them full and equal participation and decision-making powers (The Beijing Declaration, 1995). At the same time, it addressed some important issues from indigenous women's perspective, and this is known as the UN Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women. Although Momsen (2010) argued that the experiences of different states and regions show that economic prosperity helps gender equality but some gender gaps are resistant to change.

After this declaration, several international communities, NGOs and governments recognized women's rights in their countries' policies to promote sustainable development. Kabeer states that research in gender relations in Bangladesh really begins after its independence in 1971, a period which coincided with a time when women were being 'discovered' on the international agenda and research funding was being made available for this topic for the first time (Kabeer, 2001, pp.36-37). Bangladesh was one of the first developing countries to establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs, in 1978, three years after the Mexico Conference. Since then, the Government has prepared a National Policy for the Advancement of Women and made some noteworthy progress in implementing a National Action Plan prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) (ADB, 2001).

Women represent almost 50 per cent of Bangladesh's population and, therefore, it can be argued that women's empowerment and participation implicitly affect the overall development process. However, most of the existing literature argued that women are likely to be discriminated by the traditional patriarchal values and norms in Bangladesh (Kabeer, 1998/2001, Islam and Sultana, 2006, Hailm, 2005/2007). However, 'there is a shortage of studies on how developing countries conceptualize, design and manage gender mainstreaming in development policies and programs in specific political and economic contexts' (Schech and Mustafa, 2010, p. 111)

Bearing this in mind, this chapter presents the existing theoretical debates on gender and patriarchy in a Bangladeshi context. Particularly, it introduces the concepts of gender and patriarchy to examine indigenous women's status at the domestic and wider societal levels in Bangladesh, and the changing forms of this. Therefore, the following discussion illustrates how patriarchy controls women's lives and how gender analysis can be integrated with the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

## 2.2 Defining gender and patriarchy

The word 'gender' originated from the French word *genre* and refers to the social and cultural definition of male and female. Twenty years ago the word 'gender' was generally understood to be the same as 'sex' (Siwal, 2008).  It referred to the differences between men and women and was commonly used interchangeably with sex. In recent feminist literatures, the word sex denotes only the biological differences between men and women, whereas gender should be understood as the social differences between them.

The term 'gender identity' was first introduced by Stoller (1968), when he argued that sex is a biological ascription whereas gender is the result of psychological factors in terms of masculinity and femininity. After that, the term gender became popular in 1979 when Rhoda Unger urged scientists to use the term sex when referring to biological aspects of being male or female and to use the term gender when referring to social, cultural and psychological aspects of the lives of men and women (Doyle and Paludi, 1998, p.6).

In this perspective, Oakley (1972) argued that psychologists used the word gender to describe people's psychological attributes without linking them to men or women,

whereas gender is an identity which we acquire through the process of socialization. Perhaps gender relates to sex ideologically (or subjectively) insofar as observable biological sex differences are merely used to justify differential socialization and differential treatment based upon biological sex (Oakley, 1972).

In this context, gender as an analytical tool was first distinguished from sex in the late 1960s and early 1970s (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and was seen as a social construction which emerged through psychological and cultural means rather than biological differences. More recently, Rajadurai and Geetha (1998, p.4) state that, 'It is the particular society or cultural group we live in that determines which behaviour, attitudes, values, beliefs and so on are appropriate for men and women on the basis of their biological sex. And therefore, sex role refers to whether someone lives a male or female role, while gender role is how she or he lives that role'. In relation to the above debate, this research has been accomplished with various definitions of gender which are highlighted in Table 2.1.

**Table: 2.1 selected definitions of gender**

| Author | Definition of gender |
|---|---|
| Oakley (1972) | Gender refers to the socio-cultural construction of roles appropriate to men and women, and to the qualities and characteristics ascribed to being masculine or feminine. |
| Kessler & McKenna (1978) and Lorber (1994) | Gender is manufactured out of the fabric of culture and social structure and has little, if any, causal relationship to biology. |
| Pollert (1996, p.655) | Gender is a mutable dimension of experience and social relationships; without recognition of this, there is no room for change either for women or for men. |
| Lucal (1999, p. 784). | Gender displays are 'culturally established sets of behaviours, appearances, mannerisms, and other cues that we have learned to associate with members of a particular gender'. |
| Mukhopadhyay (2003, p.5) | Gender is a socially constructed phenomenon, the ramifications of which are primarily played out in the arena of inter personal relationships, which indeed have powerful social and economic implications. |

My own stance is that I agreed with Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer (2003, p.1) who make the following operational definition of gender:

*Gender refers to the social construction of differences between men and women in different societies, differences which translate in practice into inequality in resources, responsibilities, opportunities and constraint. And thus, gender analysis has to take into account the fact that these differences and inequalities are not uniform across the world. They vary according to such factors as cultural context, levels of development and the policy environment.*

It can be argued that gender relations are an important branch of gender discussions. Pollert's (1996) view is that, 'Gender relations are everywhere; the close interrogation of social process, not the juggling of empty categories, will unravel them, although gender relations are constructed and reconstructed at both a material and ideological level and are a constitutive part of class'.

**Patriarchy**: The term **'patriarchy'** implies 'male domination', 'male prejudice (against women)' or simply 'male power'. Bennett (2006) found that in modern English, the term patriarchy has three meanings. First, it can refer to the ecclesiastical power of men recognized as Christian leaders, particularly within the Greek Orthodox tradition (the archbishop of Constantinople is commonly known as the Patriarch of that Church).

Second, patriarchy can denote the legal powers of a husband/ father over his wife, children and other dependents. On this area, Rajadurai and Geetha (1998, p.5) state:

*The term (Patriarchy) means 'the absolute rule of the father or the eldest male member over his family'. This meaning of the term has been extended to describe the nature of this rule. Patriarchy is thus the rule of the father not only over all women in the family, but also over younger and socially or economically subordinate males.*

Similarly, Parpart, et al. (2000, p.207) defined patriarchy as:

*A system of male domination that is widespread but historically specific and can vary over time and context. Originally, this term was used to describe societies*

*characterized by 'the rule of the father', that is, the power of the husband or father over his wives, children and property. The term has now come to refer to the overall systemic character of oppressive and exploitative relations affecting women.*

The third meaning of patriarchy broadly draws on the feminist critique of male power (Bennett, 2006). Within this outlook Rich (1977, p.57) defined patriarchy as:

*a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.*

There have been problems with the definition of patriarchy (Barrett, 1980) and differences as to the cause of patriarchy. Different writers give different reasons for the origins and causes of patriarchy (Delphy, 1980: domestic labour, Dworkin, 1981: violence, Firestone, 1974: sexuality, cited in Bhopal, 1997). However, Bennett (2006) argues that patriarchy might be everywhere, but it is not everywhere the same, and therefore it is something we need to understand, analyse and explain within all its immense variety.

In this thesis, I would like to argue that patriarchy implicitly influences gender relationships in Bangladesh. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines traditional Bangladesh as a patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal social system and states that the life of a woman in the country is therefore dominated by patriarchal values. Such a system upholds a rigid division of labour that controls women's mobility, roles and responsibility, and also sexuality (ADB, 2001).

Given that gender and social exclusion have been adopted as the basis for this thesis, the above discussion suggests that rather than dealing with sex and gender identification, this research should focus on the changing forms of gender within gender mainstreaming and patriarchy or gender regimes framework in different policy domains in Bangladesh, in order to push forward the theoretical debates of gender and social exclusion for this thesis. According to Verloo (2000, p. 3-4), 'By recognizing policy processes so that regular policy makers will be obliged and capable [*sic*] incorporate a perspective of gender equality in their polices, this

strategy aims at a fundamental transformation, eliminating gender bias, and redirecting policies so that they can contribute towards the goal of gender equality'.

Thus, Walby (2005, p.321) argues that, 'the power of gender mainstreaming lies in the "productive tension" between its manifestation as a policy tool and its roots in feminist theory: "As a practice gender mainstreaming seeks to promote gender equality" while as a theory it "is a process of revision of key concepts to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered"'. This situation is leading to questions as to how patriarchy is connected with the gender relationship and what the nature of patriarchy is in this particular society. In this regard, the following section explains the conceptual adjustment/movement of 'women in' to 'gender and' development discourses and then directly discuss the historical development of patriarchy in particular societies and clarifies the arguments about gender and patriarchy for this research.

## 2.3 Conceptual movement from 'women in' to 'gender and' development discourse:

At the early stage, the development of women was characterized in the context of welfare approach where it assumed that 'the benefits of microeconomic strategies for growth would automatically trickle down to the poor, and the poor women would benefit as the economic position of their husbands improved' (Momsen, 2010, p.12). Thus, prior to 1970, the roles of women were described as wives and mothers, with a focus on mother and child health and on reducing fertility. Ester Boserup challenged these assumptions and published *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970). Then, Women in development (WID) approach emerged and addressed that, 'women should be integrated into economic development by focusing on income generation projects for women' (Momsen, 2010, p.12). However, the WID approach was subject to face much criticism by evidence from the Third World, which argued that women's actual or potential contribution were ignored in developing countries due to the existing structural constraints and they emphasised on the equal rights for women rather than on economic development. From this standpoint, Liberal feminists demand equal opportunities and rights for women, including equal access to jobs and equal pay, and believe individuals should be treated in accordance with their talents and efforts as opposed to characteristics of their sex with the support of

equity approach. In relation to this, they also argued that removing these barriers directly challenges the ideologies of patriarchy, as well as liberating women. This approach has examined the lives of women by focusing on the reality of women's lives or women's movement (Friedan, 1963) and women's employment (Martin and Roberts, 1984).

It could be argued that the analysis of women's subordination by the Marxist feminists and the radical feminists had largely converged with the women and development (WAD) approach (Parpart & Marchand, 1995) which is originated in the second half of the 1970s. Marxist feminists however, argue that gender inequality derives from capitalism, where men's domination of women is a by-product of capital's domination over labour. Class relations are the most important features of the social structure which determine gender relations. Subsequently, some radical feminists (Brownmiller, 1976; Firestone, 1974 and Rich, 1980) argued that sexuality itself is a major site of male domination and men's patriarchal power over women is the primary power relationship in human society. The WAD approach argued that women's position would improve if international relations became more equitable. It explained women's subordination referring to the global economy and was preoccupied with the productive sector at the expense of reproductive side of women's work and lives. However, in the WAD perspective 'no attention is paid to the fact that interventions to bridge the gap between women and development such as the introduction of new technologies may marginalise some women' (Kameri-Mbote, 2005-8, p.4).

Discussing these approaches, Zwart (1992, p.17) states that 'WID and WAD have not obtained the results hoped for are often the same reasons that many of the north's aid strategies in the Third World have generally failed. This is because they refuse to address the underlying causes of poverty, discrimination and subordination of certain social sectors within society'. As Momsen (2010, p.11) argues that 'research on women in developing countries challenged the most fundamental assumptions of international development, added a gender dimension to the study of the development process and demand a new theoretical approach'. Therefore, in the 1980s many scholars, especially socialist feminist have advocated that the only way to address women's subordinate position is to question and tackle the causes of this inequality. With this understanding, an alternative approach, the gender and

development (GAD) approach have been emerged in the mid 1970s in the UK (Young, 2002, p.322). They saw overcoming poverty and the effects of colonialism as more important than equality (Momsen, 2010, p.13). According to Reeves and Barden (2000, p.3), 'The GAD approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasises the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations'. In the GAD approach women are seen as 'agents for change, rather than passive recipients of development assistance' (Rathgeber, 1990, p.494). It also emphasised gender relations in both the labour force and the reproductive sphere (Visvanathan, 1997, p.23). However, the GAD perspective critiques the category 'woman in feminist writings and argues that the analysis of contextual social organisations and social processes has to be taken into account to explain gender relations (Cornwall, 1997, p.9). The GAD approach sought support from all levels of the state- local, regional and central (Young, 1997, p.51-54). It emphasised women's empowerment and argued that improving the status of women required active cooperation from men. Thus, I would like to argue that the discussion of 'women in' to 'gender and' development is relevant for this thesis because it gives practical insight of gender dynamics which can be used in order to develop the theoretical debates surroundings gender and social exclusion/inclusion.

However, Walby (2011) give a new account of feminism, where, she argues that the conventional feminist approach contesting with an alternative approach [post-feminist or neoliberals] and it engages with power and with government policies through justice, rights and mainstreaming gender equality projects. Therefore, I may claim that this research aimed responses with the changing nature of feminism with identifying the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to gender inequality and development perspective of indigenous people, especially women in Bangladesh.

## 2.4 Historical development of patriarchy

The development of patriarchy is rooted in the early development of hunting by men, which gave them both a new source of power and led to the development of a value system based on violent conquest (Collard, 1988). In its earliest forms, patriarchy appeared as the archaic state (Lerner, 1986). However, Spender (1985) argues that identifying the origins of patriarchy is not important, because this situation may be

overthrown. For some radical feminists (Firestone, 1974), the original shift to patriarchy was simply a consequence of men's greater strength, stemming from women's weakness during pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. Rich (1977) argues that it was the discovery of the male role in reproduction that first led men to seek control over women, whereas Brownmiller (1976) argues that it is men's ability to rape that enables them to dominate women

Historically, patriarchies have involved the ranking of men within and across families and generations. Based on this idea, Ludden (1997) conducted a study to analyze patriarchal practice during the early modern period, that is circa 1550-1850. When early modern states were formed, the institution formed the basis upon which modern entitlement to family property would be built, and thus patriarchy was put on a distinctive footing in various regions of state power. Ludden argues that in this period, urban and rural differences also emerged that would evolve into the modern dichotomy between feudal and capitalist forms of patriarchy. He also points out that patriarchal power has distinct forms in different places.

Walby (1990) argues that the theory of patriarchy enables us to distinguish between the different structures of male domination on the one hand and individual men on the other. However, in later work Walby (1997) reshaped the idea of patriarchy onto gender regimes, where she identified the patriarchal relations through household production, paid work, state institutions, sexuality, cultural institutions and in male violence, which captures the ways in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women, and suggests that their specific interconnections produce different gender regimes or gender relationships in different circumstances. With this understanding, I would like argue that the development of patriarchy can depend on the nature of a particular society. For this reason, we need to understand the nature of patriarchy in relation to the multiple dimensions of life, such as socio-cultural, political and economic.

### 2.4.1 Socio-cultural dimension of patriarchy

It is debatable whether the social and cultural dimensions of a gender perspective can be distinguished, as they are interlinked with each other. In this context, it could be argued that the gender relationship is based on gender perception and it interacts

within society through different cultural practices. On this understanding, this thesis combines discussion of the social and cultural dimensions of patriarchy.

Ludden (1997) argues that patriarchy refers to the power of men over women, but older meanings of this term indicate other aspects of patriarchal power that demand attention. Papanek (1973) analyses segregation and seclusion as patriarchal forms of controlling women, where segregation and seclusion are related to status, the division of labour, interpersonal dependency, social distance, and the maintenance of moral standards as specified by the society. Papanek (1973) also argues that the veiling of the face, a practice that supports the segregation of the sexes, has been forced on women in the name of Islam, although that religion requires only modest covering of the head and body. Women have sometimes used the veil to their advantage, for example, to gain privacy and protection, but this should not obscure the restrictive and controlling functions of the veil (ibid, 1973).

In Bangladesh, the cultural practice of patriarchy is predominantly based on *Islamic ideology*, and socio-religious commentaries have assigned women their roles in society and detailed their rights and obligations (Sumaiya, 1998). In this respect, it could be argued that women in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, have often been dependent on men. However, whilst women's segregation at physical, social, political, economic and psychological levels is symbolized by a system of *purdah* which confines them to the home and to the control of men (ibid, 1998), this research argues that it is not always the customary practice of *purdah* (veil) that leads to women's segregation. There are other internal dynamics behind the marginalized position of women in Bangladesh. I would like to argue that indigenous women are not restricted by the *purdah* culture of Bangladesh, but they are considered the most vulnerable group in Bangladesh. This means that the patriarchal culture is not only implied in religious ideology, it may be embodied in the structure of the society.

Boserup (1982) conducted a study on rural women in Bangladesh and revealed that:

> *In countries with purdah systems women lose status if they perform work which requires them to leave the confines of their own household. Therefore, they cannot make a rational choice between different types of money earning activities, nor can they decide how to allocate their time between income earning and domestic work* (cited in Kabeer, 2001, p.37).

Similarly, a study by the ADB (2001) found that, traditionally, a woman in Bangladesh derives her status from her family. Her role includes the maintenance of her family as a social institution and as an economic entity. Most importantly, through childbearing and child rearing, she ensures the existence of succeeding generations.

Perhaps patriarchy can conceal divisions in society in much the same way as male perspectives have concealed the oppression of women (Collins, 1980, Ramazanoglu, 1989). Black feminists (Carby, 1982 and Amos and Parmar, 1984) suggest that because of racism, black men do not benefit from patriarchal social structures in the same way as white men and that black men are not distinguished from black women by the benefits of patriarchy. In this point of view, this research has been accomplished using the ideas of black feminists, since indigenous women in Bangladesh could be identified as black women, and their experiences and ideas express the interconnectedness of development issues and social issues at the domestic and wider societal levels. In fact, black feminism is concerned with how social groups are organized and what the internal dynamics of groups are, rather than the binary thinking that has been so central to oppression on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (Collins, 1991). Thus, I can argue that patriarchal structures are relatively weak in black communities because of relative power than black men hold in relation to white men on account of the racist nature of society. At the same time, different forms of gender dynamics in the context of patriarchal or 'gender regimes' has provided that non-white men could applied the patriarchal power over white women too. In this way, this research enables us to examine the nature of social exclusion and inclusion in two marginalized communities (Chakma and Garo) from mainstream society by looking at issues of patriarchal and matrilineal practices in Bangladesh. This argument is particularly useful for this thesis as it incorporate my concerns with a result of structural inequalities from mainstream society being an indigenous people, especially indigenous women, in Bangladesh.

Millett (1977) argues that the family is a central part of society's power structure; it both sustains patriarchal power in the public world and is itself a source of women's oppression. Many feminists have argued that the family is the cutting edge of patriarchal oppression that increases awareness of domestic violence and the sexual abuse of both women and children within the home (Firestone, 1974). Dinnerstein

(1987) argues that it is women's participation in childcare which is the root of women's subordination; and Chodorow (1978) states that it is women's role in mothering which is the basis of their exploitation. Rich (1977), however, states that it is not the biological fact of giving birth, but the fact that women reproduce in a patriarchal society.

It could be argued that many of these ideas have been criticized for a biological determinism which contradicts current scientific thinking. Thus, Bacchi (1990) has argued that insistence on, or denial of, significant sexual difference may also be based upon a false dichotomy that distracts our attention from the need to challenge the dominant values of women and men.

This research argues that rural women's lives in Bangladesh, particularly women's freedom of choice, decision-making power and access to resources, are controlled by the norms of a patriarchal society (Sebstad and Cohen, 2000) though some groups do not formally accept the values of patriarchy. For example, the Garo indigenous people claim that their tradition has given them matrilineal social practices. However, they are also considered marginalized as production units for bearing and rearing children (Ahmad, 2001), an idea which is briefly analyzed in the findings and discussion chapter of this thesis.

## 2.4.2 Political dimensions of patriarchy

Dobash and Dobash (1979) state that the structural aspect of patriarchy is manifest in the hierarchical organization of social institutions and social relations, an organizational pattern that by definition elevates selected individuals, groups, or classes to positions of power, privilege, and leadership and relegates others to some form of subservience. Mandelbaum (1988) states that in South Asia (North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan), like others in the Indian cultural sphere, Muslims share the assumption that hierarchy pervades gender, and most social encounters are presumed to be between a superior and a subordinate. This author also states that women's participation in secular public affairs was once minimal, but now many Bangladeshi women can vote and participate in public life. Mandelbaum criticizes the fact that men are suspicious of such trends, because they suspect that such public behaviour by their wives will damage their family honour (ibid, 1988). In such cases,

they can even terminate their marital relationship by sending their wives back to their family of origin or having the marriage annulled.

Millett (1977) argues that in all known societies the relationship between the sexes is based upon power relationships and is therefore a political relationship. It can be argued that women's position at the domestic and public levels, especially in rural areas, is lower than that of men. From early childhood, a female child is likely to have domestic responsibilities, and she often plays a very submissive role at the domestic and public levels. The political dimension of patriarchy suggests that the gender relationship is not only controlled by socio-cultural perspectives but also controlled by the state. In this context, I would like to argue that gender differences are made by man and they are legitimised in a patriarchal society in order to protect unequal political rights and hierarchies. Thus, this thesis looks at gender roles and gender relationships in both the domestic and the public spheres and how these are reflected in the political aspects of the social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

### 2.4.3 Economic dimension of patriarchy

Capitalism is not indifferent to the gender of individuals in the class structure, as we learn from second wave feminists' accounts of patriarchy (Delphy, 1977; Hartmann, 1976; Walby, 1986; Gottfried, 1998). Delphy locates the alleged economic dynamic of patriarchy in men's exploitation of women's labour in marriage and the household, whereas Hartmann (1976) cites defences of a theory of patriarchy as a part of a 'dual system'. Dual systems theory examines the interrelationship of capitalism and patriarchy to explain women's position within the labour market (Cockburn, 1983; Hartmann, 1981). Hartmann (1981) argues that although they have become bound up with each other, neither of these 'dual systems' can be reduced to the other.

 Siddiqi (1997) argues that patriarchal and capitalist modes of domination are often critical of multinational production that draws on a female labour force. The effect of industrial employment, frequently, has been to rework older forms of domination, as well as to produce new forms of gendered power relations. Despite cultural and historical specificities, studies of women industrial workers in South and Southeast Asia reveal a striking similarity in the deployment of patriarchal modes in industrial settings. Siddiqi also argues that certain sexuality tropes, such as respectability and

modesty, are consistently invoked. At the same time, on closer examination, the analytical distinction between capitalist and patriarchal domination can be difficult to sustain (Siddiqi, 1997). Millett (1977) takes the view that patriarchy also rests upon economic exploitation and the use or threat of force, for example foot binding, suttee and clitorectomy.

The economic dimensions of patriarchy also focus the discussion on the unequal inheritance rights of women in Bangladesh. According to Muslim law, women's rights to inheritance are not equal to those of men, because a daughter inherits a share half the size of her brother's and a wife receives only one-eighth of her deceased husband's property (ADB, 2001). As a result, Bengali women, especially rural women, are more likely to be economically dependent on male members of their family. Although, in Bangladesh, rural women tend to participate in home production of food and in agricultural activities, they do not have the right to control the productive and material resources. This thesis is based on indigenous women in Bangladesh who are traditionally involved in income generating activities, but whose contributions tend to be ignored because of the domination of patriarchal values. Therefore, this research highlights the economic aspect of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to the employment and opportunities and land rights of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

## 2.5 Women's current status in Bangladesh

The traditional patriarchal society of Bangladesh is based on class and gender divisions. Class mobility allows movement between rich and poor, but the division of social space and the difference in behavioural norms between men and women are rigidly maintained. The family, which constitutes the basic unit of social control, sets the norm for male and female roles. Within this system, the father, or in his absence his male next of kin, is head of the household. As a result, both decision-making powers and economic control are vested in the hands of a male member of the family. (ADB, 2001)

It can be argued that in Bangladesh women are identified as mothers and valued for their reproductive powers. The major thrust of economic planning is ruled by men, who ignore the need for women's development. The government has played a negligible role in bringing women together for social and welfare objectives, and has

allocated only 0.3 per cent of the total public sector budget for this (White, 1992). Even though, in the 1980s, 55 per cent of development projects specified that they worked with women in Bangladesh, this was only as a controllable element in the area of population control (Jahan, 1989).

Similarly, the universal acceptance of gender inequality buttressed by social and religious sanctions in favour of male dominance of women occurs in every sphere of life. The unquestioning acceptance of patriarchal gender ideology and gender relations in all the social structures, including those of family, community and state, has contributed directly to domestic violence. 'Under patriarchy, men firmly believe that a woman's place is in the home and any job outside the home is just a fantasy to be indulged in. A woman should be at home spending her time cooking, cleaning and looking after the children – or woe betide her' (Khan, 2001, p.122).

In this respect, the Preliminary Report of the BBS Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2005) revealed that inequality widened rapidly in the 1990s and Gini coefficients deteriorated from 0.388 in 1991-92 to 0.451 in 2000 at the national level, from 0.364 to 0.393 for rural areas, and from 0.398 to 0.497 for urban areas. In the case of gender inequality, the evidence shows that the incidence of female-headed households may be as high as 15 per cent, with a heavy concentration of poverty among them (Mannan, 2000). HIES data, however, provides a more complex scenario. Female-headed households are subject to extreme poverty much more than male-headed households. But there is little difference in terms of absolute poverty between male and female-headed households. Absolute poverty is slightly higher among male-headed households in rural areas, while the opposite is true in urban areas (BBS, 2002). Agarwal (1997, p.11) argues that, 'Incorrect perceptions can thus reduce a woman's bargaining power in relation to family subsistence not only by leading to an underestimation of her needs and an undervaluation of her waged contributions, but also by affecting her "worth" in the labour market, thus limiting the potential advantage of her seeking waged work'. Therefore, this research tries to identify gender inequality in terms of power and control discourse in the personal and socio-cultural relations of indigenous women in matrilineal and patriarchal communities in Bangladesh.

Heise, Pitanguy and Germain (1999, p.5) argued that, 'In many cultures women are socialized into accepting physical and emotional chastisement as a husband's marital prerogative, limiting the range of behaviour they consider abuse'. The acceptance of physical violence and other kinds of violence committed by a husband, brothers, father of any other members of the family has contributed greatly to the increase in domestic violence in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, many people think that men are superior and women must be chastised. 'Many women have been brought up in the belief that it is acceptable for their fathers to beat their mothers and themselves, and for their husbands to do the same once they are married' (Khan, 2001, p.162).

Many studies report that women who live in poverty are more likely to experience violence than women of higher financial status (Gonzales De Olarte and Gavilano Llosa, 1999; Martin et al. 1999; Nelson and Zimmerman, 1996; Rodgers, 1994; Straus and Gells, 1986 cited in, Bandyopadhyay and Khan, 2003, p.65). Kottis (1990) attempted to explain the reasons behind the higher level of poverty among women than among men, and suggested an inverse relationship between women's labour-force participation rate and the pace of economic development. The rapid transformation of the economy through the process of economic development has drastically changed the employment structure of different sectors. This change has negatively affected the employment opportunities available to women in general, and resulted in a higher level of poverty among women at the early stage of development.

The United Nations Population Fund (2000) reports that many cultures condone, or at least tolerate, a certain amount of violence against women. Men are seen as having a right to discipline their wives as they see fit. The right of a husband to beat or physically intimidate his wife is a deeply held conviction in many societies. The acceptance of physical violence committed by a husband as legitimate discipline causes a wife to suffer such violence without protest and without talking about it with other people. Bangladeshi women are the most 'battered' in the world: an estimated 47 per cent have suffered from various types of assault (Mahmood, 2004). As a result, it could be argued that these norms and practice tend to create barriers to women's choice and freedom of action (Mahmud, 2003).

In relation to the above arguments, the following discussion highlights women's position in Bangladesh with regard to education, legal rights, health, religion, the economy and the political sphere.

**Women and education**

In 1990, Bangladesh signed the World Declaration on Education for All. However, the country is still far behind the desired literacy level. The BBS data (2008) showed the literacy rate for women in 2007 had increased to 52.7 per cent, as compared to 59.4 per cent for men. According to the Directorate of Primary Education (2007), the net enrolment rate in primary education for boys is 87.8 per cent and that for girls 94.7 per cent, and the adult literacy rate for women is 48.9 per cent and for men 61.7 per cent (Welfare Monitoring Survey/Population Census, 2009). Accordingly, the urban-rural literacy gap for both sexes is 18.3 per cent: urban and rural males have rates of 55.7 per cent and 36.2 per cent respectively; and urban and rural females have rates of 47.0 per cent and 30.5 per cent (BBS, 2001).

The overall literacy rate for the indigenous population is 32.2 per cent, with males and females having rates of 39.3 and 24.8 per cent respectively. This reveals that the literacy rates of indigenous women are far lower than those of Bengali women. In indigenous people's areas no initiatives have been taken to teach children in their mother tongue, which discourages indigenous children from education (Halim, 2005; Hailm, 2002). A study conducted in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) revealed that there is also a wide gap in school enrolment rates between indigenous children and Bengali children. For example: the rate for 6-10-year-olds was 66 per cent for Bengalis and 34 per cent for non-Bengalis (53 per cent for Chakma children, 45 per cent for Marma children, 32 per cent for Tripura children, and 8 per cent for Mro children) (BRAC, 1999).

Mandelbaum (1988, p.36) investigated the idea that a woman with a high school or college education is likely to be less stringent in her *purdha* observance and have less stringency expected of her than is the case for a woman of the same economic class and region who has little education. Although *purdah* practices are indeed being changed among urban, educated women, they have not been totally discarded; nor have the underlying values been jettisoned (ibid, 1988, p.37). However, in regard to higher education, the public universities in Bangladesh do not

have a clear policy in terms of admitting indigenous students. In this context, Halim (2007, p.115) states that the majority of indigenous students are not in as advantageous a situation as their Bengali counterparts in terms of graduating from standard institutions and thus fail to get admitted to university.

Early marriage is one of the prominent factors in low educational attainment among females, and this leads to lower participation in economic activities as well as restricted physical mobility after marriage (Khatun, 2002). As a result, it could be argued that gender discrimination in terms of early marriage, the practice of dowry, and limited property inheritance rights causes misery for many women, especially rural indigenous women, in Bangladesh.

**Women and legal rights**

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights to all citizens, but in family matters such as marriage, divorce, custody, maintenance, and inheritance, the laws discriminate against women. For example, women's rights to property and inheritance are not equal to those of men. Under Muslim law, a daughter inherits one half as much as her brother inherits. A wife receives one eighth of her deceased husband's property, whereas a husband receives a quarter of his deceased wife's property, when there is a child. Hindu women's rights to inheritance are limited. Only Christians provide equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters (MOWCA, 1997 cited in ADB, 2001).

Therefore, I would like to argue that, due to a variety of cultural factors as well as the misinterpretation of religion, women's human rights are often violated. Various laws have been enacted and amended to protect women's rights: the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1974, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, the Family Court Ordinance of 1985, and the Child Marriage Registration Act of 1992. However, poor women are often not aware of their rights (ADB, 2001). Apart from these laws, Bangladesh has a number of special laws specifically prohibiting certain forms of violence against women, including the Penal Code of 1860, the Anti-Dowry Prohibition Act (1980), the Cruelty to Women Ordinance (1983), the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (1993), and the Prevention of Repression of Women and Children Act (2000).

It could be argued that women are still not treated equally in practice, despite having legal recognition from the state. Chowdhury (2003) states that the practices of inequality are manifold and there is a gulf between existing theory and its actual application. For example, a woman is generally given half the share of her male counterpart by Muslim inheritance practices. A son can prevent his paternal uncle or aunt inheriting any part of his deceased's father's property, while a daughter cannot do the same. This means that the patrilineal ancestry system on property inheritance subject to absolute power to male member in a family which create a hierarchical relationship between men and women.

This thesis is based on indigenous communities, especially on the women of these communities, in Bangladesh. Therefore, we need look at the particular legal issues that affect indigenous peoples. The Constitution of Bangladesh declares, in Article 1 Part 1, that it is a unitary state. Article 3 Part 1 states that Bangla has been adopted as the state language, and Article 6 Part 1 declares that the citizens of Bangladesh are to be known as Bangalee (Mohsin, 1997, p.61). The Constitution of Bangladesh (1972) defines Bangalee nationalism in Article 9.

> *The unity and solidarity of the Bengali nation, which derives its identity from its language and culture, and attained a sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengali nationalism* (Article 9).

Mohsin (1997, p.92) argues that the imposition of Bangalee nationality over all the citizens of Bangladesh ignored the cultural distinctiveness of the other groups in Bangladesh, and thus these people could be culturally marginalised by the state.

In relation to this, it could be argued that indigenous people have been deprived of their fundamental rights in Bangladesh. However the Constitution of Bangladesh explicitly states in Article 11 that, 'The republic [State] shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedom and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed.' It also states that:

> *(1)The state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens,*

> *(2) the state shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man, and to ensure the equitable distribution of*

> *wealth and opportunities among citizens, in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic* (Article 19)

Article 27 of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law, and Article 28(1) prohibits any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 41 stipulates freedom of religion; and Article 42 guarantees the right to property.

Apart from the Constitution, the Government of Bangladesh is also bound by numerous international instruments, more specifically by the UN Charter of 1945 (Articles 1 and 55), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Article 2), the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (Article 2), the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (Convention No. 107 of 1957),  and so on, to respect and undertake measures to protect the customary land rights of indigenous peoples and to prevent the alienation of these peoples from mainstream participation. However customary laws and national laws both discriminate against women.

The Constitution of Bangladesh has failed to guarantee either equal opportunities for women or people's safety in all formal and informal situations, irrespective of sex, race, caste or place of birth (Halim, 2005, p.70). The inheritance laws of most indigenous people, including those of the most numerous groups, such as the Chakmas (people who live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and who are one of the groups this study focuses on) and the Santal, tend to be exclusionary in their treatment of women. The notable exceptions to this in terms of inheritance are the matrilineal Khasi and Garo peoples. The latter live in Tangail and Madhupur, in the plains, and they are the other group that this research focuses on (Halim, 2004).

In this respect, Carter and Barrett (2006) argue that asset-based measures of poverty dynamics are more robust in terms of measurement error than measures of conventional expenditure or income in ascertaining the extent of poverty. According to HIES data for 2005, estimates of the incidence of poverty according to ownership of land, using the upper poverty line, were found to be 46.3 per cent for landless households. The repeat household surveys (2007) by the IRRI and IFRI in

Bangladesh showed that the average size of land owned per household declined from 0.61 to 0.53 hectares (cited in Hossain, 2009). The picture shows a growing trend of pauperization in the ownership of this important natural resource base for agricultural production (ibid, 2009). The mobility in land ownership information included panel data for the recent period (2000-2007) and identified that the nearly 69 per cent of households who were functionally landless (owned less than 0.2 hectares of land) in 2000 remained so in 2007 (Hossain, 2009). Agarwal (1994, p.1455) argues that, 'The ownership and control of property is the single most critical contributor to the gender gap in economic well-being, social status, and empowerment'. In this context, I would like to argue that landlessness is a key poverty dynamic for this research, as it highlights the process of exclusion in terms of indigenous women's rights and control of property within and between matrilineal and patriarchal indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Further discrimination is to be found in indigenous people's marriage systems. Marriages are guided by custom rather than by state laws, and have not usually been recorded (Halim, 2007). In a finding that links to this, Halim (2007) states that there is no birth registration system in the various indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

As regards legal practices, this thesis argues that although Bengali women tend to be discriminated against by state laws, indigenous women are more likely to be excluded from their legal rights, and this argument is elaborated on in the data analysis chapters (see Chapter 6 & 8).

**Women and health**

In Bangladesh, households pay 63 per cent of their total expenditure for health and family planning services (Sen, 2003). Moreover, two-thirds of children under six years of age are either under-weight or stunted, and some 17 per cent are moderately-to-severely wasted. Of the approximately 20 million under-fives in Bangladesh, an estimated 380,000 die from pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles and neonatal tetanus every year (Abedin, 1997; Baqui et al., 1998).

Women's general health care is seriously ignored in rural Bangladesh and women face special health hazards such as severe anaemia, inadequate nutrition, multiple pregnancies, abortions and so on. Islam and Sultana (2006) point out that a

housewife has to take care of the health of all the members of her family, but there is hardly anyone to take care of her. The average life expectancy was 45.2 years (46 years for males, 44 years for females) in 1972. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2002), the average life expectancy at the beginning of the new millennium was 61.1 years (60.7 years for males, 61.5 years for females). It can be argued that most of the women are likely to be engaged in household work and low risk jobs such as childcare and garment-making, and this is why female life expectancy rates are higher than those of men. Momsen (2010, p.21) also argued that physiologically women tend to live longer than men for hormonal reasons. From this standpoint, it could be argued that it is not always inequalities of treatment in terms of access to health care and nutrition reflects the effects of discrimination of life expectancy.

According to HIES data (2000), a higher health risk to women is concentrated particularly in the reproductive years. The morbidity rate of women in the 15 –44 age range is about 31 per cent higher than that of men, followed by 16 per cent higher in the 45-59 age range. According to the NSP (2002), almost one-half of children (47 per cent) and one third of non-pregnant mothers (33 per cent) are anaemic, which is largely due to iron deficiency. It is against this background that this research focuses on discrimination in access to health facilities affecting indigenous people, especially women, within and between their communities and between their communities and mainstream society.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), about 23000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year in Bangladesh, while 600000 others suffer from various neo-natal complications. The National Health Service has been inadequate for its purpose. It has been curative rather than preventative in nature, and it is basically urban based (Khan, 1998). Factors such as ill health, maternal mortality, and unnatural death have all made women more vulnerable than men (Islam and Sultana, 2006). Given the health situation in the country, this research investigated health discrimination to see whether it was part of the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

**Women and religion**

The majority of the population (about 90 per cent) of Bangladesh are Muslims. Therefore, the impact of changing patterns of urban and rural life, and of economic and political changes in post-colonial society, can be seen as being reflected in changes in the *purdah* (veil) system. For instance, the seclusion of women and their consequent exclusion from gainful employment outside the home is often a feature of lower-middle-class urban life in South Asia, while upper-class urban families who could more readily 'afford' to observe *purdah* may discard it under the influence of increasing contacts with modern education and western life styles (Papanek , 1973)

In Bangladesh women are heavily secluded and segregated, maintaining the tradition *of purdah* (Dixon 1976; Abdullah and Zeidenstein, 1982; Kabeer, 1988; Mandelbaum, 1988; Amin, 1995 cited in Balk, 1997, p.153). *Purdah* is the means by which a rigid functional and spatial gender division of labour is upheld. *Purdah* also represents a set of norms internalised by women regarding appropriate behaviour (Adnan, 1989). The Islamic social institution of *purdah* defines separate spaces for men and women and ties the protection of family honour (*izzat*) to the control of female sexuality. *Purdah* restricts women's mobility outside the home and thus the range of women's economic activities and their involvement in public office and decision-making. It allows male authorities to exercise control over all women in the public sphere (Adnan, 1989 cited in Baden et al.; 1994, p.38).

Variations in *purdah* by economic class are everywhere readily apparent. Poor women, mainly the lowest groups in a local social hierarchy, are more visible publicly than are those of wealthier, higher ranking families (Mandelbaum, 1988)**.** In his study, Mandelbaum found that Muslim women are scarcely seen in the bazaar (market), except as figures in *burkhas* (special garments designed to cover their body and face) moving about quietly, or as poor vendors sitting silently beside their trays of fruits and vegetables. On the other hand, Burmese (indigenous) women position themselves centre stage on their side of the street, loudly hawking their wares, bargaining vigorously with customers, and chatting with passers-by (Mandelbaum, 1988; pp.102-103). Against this background, this research sought to explain how indigenous women were likely to be excluded in the local labour market.

**Women and the economy**

It could be argued that the role of women in Bangladesh has been significantly changed over the last two decades. Women are engaging in both the formal and informal sectors such as teachers, lawyers, bankers and ready-made garments sectors etc. As a result, the female economic activity rate in Bangladesh now appears higher than that in most other Asian countries (BBS, 1992).

Traditional gender-based restrictions on women's employment are now being challenged. The 1980s and 1990s saw a tremendous expansion in opportunities for women's employment in urban areas, particularly in the ready-made garment industry, in which around 1.5 million women are currently working. Urban labour force participation rates for women rose from around 12 per cent in 1983-4 to 21 per cent in 1995-6 (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004).

According to the Gender Development Index of the UNDP, in 2002, Bangladesh ranked 110th out of 144 countries, with an estimated earned income of PPP US$1150 for females and PPP US$2035 for males. Purchasing Power Parity means $1 has the same purchasing power in the domestic economy as $1 has in the United States). This means that women are likely to be considered the poorest of the poor.

Chaudhuri (2010) states that women are paid at a lower rate than men for the same work in the informal sector. Over 95 per cent of female-headed households in Bangladesh are considered to fall below the poverty line (Human Development Report, 1996). In Bangladesh, official estimates suggest that less than a tenth of households are headed by women (BBS, 1996), but the actual proportion could be around 20 to 30 per cent (Afsar, 1997; Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, 1997). A study by Boyce, Betsy and Hartmann (1983) finds that a poor woman is relatively more likely to be the victim of various types of domestic violence than a man or a rich woman.

Halim (2005, p.69) argues that indigenous women remain among the poorest, most violated, most oppressed, most scorned and most exploited groups in society, though in terms of rights of inheritance, legal and political rights, and decision-making powers their position is a little better than that of non-indigenous rural women in Bangladesh. Halim describes the situation:

*Adivasi (indigenous) sharecroppers in Sirajgonj district receive as little as 60 taka (0.86 US$) a day for working in the fields, which is much lower than the pay that may be given to a Bengali sharecropper. Adivasi women suffer double discrimination, receiving as little as 35 taka (0.50 US$) a day* (Daily Ittefaq, January 25, 2003 cited in Halim, 2005).

Similarly, Mandi (Garo) women working in beauty parlours do not even have the status of a labourer (these women are considered to be part of the informal sector) and are therefore deprived their legal rights (Gulrukh, 2004; Halim, 2004).

To tackle this problem, microcredit programmes have been devised to empower women and reduce poverty in Bangladesh. It could be argued that microcredit programmes themselves challenge patriarchal notions by giving women access to resources and thus improving their decision-making powers and their control over resources (ADB, 2001). The rural credit market in Bangladesh is highly segmented. Formal public institutions provide about 20 per cent of rural credit, while informal sources provide less than 45 per cent. The total number of microcredit programmes has been increasing. Bangladesh's NGOs provide microcredit to some 8 million people, mostly women (World Bank, 1998), and their number has increased substantially over the years (ADB, 2001). As Kabeer (2003) notes, by increasing women's income, women can have an increased number of choices, networking, greater household decision- making power, greater social status, and greater sense of confidence and independence. Against this background, this thesis identifies the process of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to economic aspects of indigenous life.

**Women and politics**

In Bangladesh, women have been more politically visible in the last two decades. The 1972 Constitution reserved 30 seats for women (through indirect election by other members) in addition to the 300 elected seats in the National Parliament. In 1973 and 1979, no woman became a Member of Parliament through direct elections. In the 1979 general election, 17 women contested parliamentary seats, but none was elected. In the 1991 national elections, 36 women contested 35 seats, and won eight seats. In 1996, 36 women stood in the national election, and won 10 seats. Later two women won in a bye-election (ADB, 2001).

In the 2001 national elections, 38 women candidates stood in 46 constituencies, while 36 women candidates stood in the 1996 general election in 48 constituencies. The current Parliament of Bangladesh contains 345 seats and includes 45 seats reserved for women, which are distributed on the basis of the comparative strength of the various parties in the Parliament. The occupants of all these seat are called Members of Parliament or MPs. The ninth Parliament (election held on December 29, 2008) has the highest number of female lawmakers: 64, including 19 elected members. This was a first in Bangladesh, with 60 women candidates contesting 65 constituencies, and 19 women candidates winning 23 parliamentary seats (Source: New Age - Wednesday, 31 December, 2008).

Between 1991 and 2009, two women governed Bangladesh.  These were the leaders of the two largest political parties in the country. During this period (1991-2009) one woman became Prime Minister and the other held the position of Leader of the Opposition at the same time. The current government has appointed five women to the cabinet (three as full ministers and two as state ministers), making women responsible for key portfolios such as agriculture, home affairs, foreign affairs, women's and children's affairs, and labour and employment. For the first time, a woman has been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the House in Parliament, and a woman MP has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee that deals with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. Many women are now members of local government councils that have important responsibilities for rural and urban development.

It should be noted that some Adivasi (indigenous) women in both the CHT and the plains got directly elected to the lower tier of the administration, the Union Parishad. One Garo Adivasi woman has become Municipal Commissioner in Mymensingh (a district of Bangladesh) (Hailm, 2007, p.122).

However, there are no seats reserved for minority groups in the Parliament, as the Constitution does not formally differentiate between religious and ethnic minority identities. In this context, Chowdhury (2008, p.100) argues that the political parties and politicians in Bangladesh are generally against the representation of ethnic communities in political parties and in Parliament. Guhathakurta (1985, p.84) argues

that women face 'the personalization of problems that camouflage their political implications'.

The above situation highlights the fact that the top leadership positions may be held by women, but the overall percentage of women elected in national elections is very small. This means that under the leadership of women, the majority of elected representatives are male. It shows that women still tend to be excluded from participation in direct state politics and government, due to structural barriers.

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter has dealt with definitions of gender and patriarchy in the context of development discourses about these notions. In addition, it has identified the multiple dimensions of patriarchy in which the idea of male domination and women's subordination at the domestic and wider societal levels predominates. The discussion of the different dimensions of patriarchy has highlighted how Bengali women's, especially rural women's, power of choice and decision-making power and their access to resources are often controlled by patriarchal values. It has been argued that male dominance is a common feature in Bangladesh. Several mechanisms and institutions maintain male dominance in all the social structures. A major one is the propagation of *purdah* (the veil), which tends to be misinterpreted in many religious texts and by many spiritual people.

In this regard, Rauf (2012, p.27) stated that, 'Bangladeshi society is a highly patriarchal Muslim dominated society where all household family decisions are made by men. Men control women's labour, women's choice of marriage, access to resources, and legal, social, health, economic and political institutions are mediated by men'. Similarly, it has been demonstrated that women's identity is constructed through the behaviour, attitudes, values and beliefs that they adopt from traditional patriarchal gender relationships within their society in Bangladesh. This chapter has also highlighted the fact that Bengali women face different types of inequality, abuse, oppression and exploitation. In this area, I accept the argument of Islam and Sultana (2006) that social customs and traditions, illiteracy and lack of employment opportunities have hampered the total integration of women into the mainstream of development activities in Bangladesh. This results in discrimination against women

at birth, leading to them being deprived of access to all the opportunities and benefits of family and societal life, thus putting them in the most disadvantageous position (Islam and Sultana, 2006).

At the same time, this chapter has described the arguments of 'women in' to 'gender and' development discourses, and drawn attention to the concept of gender mainstreaming and gender regime. It identifies that 'women in development' (WID) and 'gender and development' (GAD) are two major approaches to integrate women into development. WID approach gave importance to women's productive roles and emphasised their integration into the formal economy as a means of improving their status (Razavi & Miller, 1995, p.3), and ignores the underlying problems of class and gender inequality. On the contrary, the GAD approach examines gender relations and proposes the redistribution of power between the sexes with a view to empowering women. However, this thesis placing the gender analysis within the discussion of both WID and GAD frameworks, and then linked to the concept of patriarchy with regards of the changing nature of feminism. This has been accomplished by identifying the processes of social exclusion and inclusion among indigenous communities, especially indigenous women, in Bangladesh. In this regard, I agreed with Walby (2005) that gender mainstreaming is a process to promote gender equality.

Similarly, Nassubum (1988b) states that increased human capabilities have a positive impact on both gender equality and economic growth. This means that women's empowerment can enable women to oppose authoritative patriarchal power structures through collective action. In this way, this chapter has addressed the fact that indigenous women's integration into income generating activities often unrecognized by women themselves and dominant groups.

Chen and Mahmud (1995) argue that women's backward position and poor bargaining power within a patriarchal structure can be improved through enhancing women's self-perception (self-esteem and self-confidence) and gender relations within the household through bargaining power. However, I agree that concerted efforts by national and international development agencies, and the Government's own commitment to both its national and international pledges, have paved the way for the enhancement of women's position and status in society.

In the light of all this, I would like to argue that the discussion of gender and patriarchy is relevant to this thesis, as it explains the nature of gender relationships and gender regimes among indigenous communities and in mainstream society, linking them to social exclusion and the capability approach. I can argue gender inequality is perhaps the most widespread form of social exclusion in Bangladesh where poverty is not only a 'absolute' but also a 'relative' fact, in a particular context, and this will be illustrated in the following chapter in more details.

# Poverty and Social Exclusion

## 3.1 Introduction

The concept of poverty linked with social exclusion is an essential one in contemporary social policy theory and practice throughout the world. This chapter addresses different dimensions of this phenomenon in the developed and developing worlds. The thesis will focus on the extent of poverty among ethnic minority groups, especially among ethnic minority women, and how this situation has been tackled. In this respect, Alcock (2006) argues that the identification of particular groups who are experiencing poverty may suggest that policies to combat the phenomenon should be focused on them in particular (Alcock, 2006, p.23). Therefore, this chapter outlines various definitions of poverty and social exclusion in relation to the dynamics of poverty and social exclusion in Bangladesh. In addition, the chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework for the thesis.

The concept of 'social exclusion' emerged in France and has influenced policy discourse in other countries in the European Union, as well as in developing countries like Bangladesh. The concept is central to the efforts of United Nations agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). Indeed, the International Institute of Labour Studies, attached to the International Labour Office, carried out a great deal of conceptual and empirical background work on the concept in relation to developing countries in preparation for the World Social Summit that was held in Copenhagen in 1995. The concept also offers an integrated framework for analysing the experience of deprivation, including gender-related deprivation, as a form of exclusion.

Bradshaw et al. (2004), working within the United Kingdom government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), also identified the drivers of social exclusion in terms of income, employment, education, health, housing, neighbourhood and networks, and crime and the fear of crime. It can be argued that there is no one absolute definition

of social exclusion and poverty that can be applied across the world: the notion of social exclusion and poverty is understood differently in the developed and developing world. Sinfield (2006) argues that, it is impossible to engage with the underlying causes of poverty without taking account of the ways in which resources are distributed throughout the whole of society. Poverty, therefore, has also to be studied and tackled as a characteristic of society and not just of those people who are currently living in poverty.

This view implicitly acknowledges some difficulties in drawing up a theoretical framework for research. Given these difficulties, to make this task more manageable, I tried to find out the relevance of social exclusion and its connection to the concept of poverty in relation to gender and inequality discourse. Thus this chapter gives an analysis of different paradigms of social exclusion and poverty in Bangladesh and looks at the historical trends of the phenomenon in Bangladesh.

In addition, this chapter explains the different dimensions of poverty and social exclusion in a global context. Poverty and exclusion are often seen as closely related, overlapping or sometimes even indistinguishable in the existing literature. Therefore the following discussion examines the relationship of poverty and social exclusion in the current world and at the same time highlights the strengths and problems of various definitions and measurements of poverty and social exclusion.

## 3.2 Historical origins of the concept of poverty and social exclusion

Poverty is one of the major problems in the world and it is growing, particularly in relative terms. The Human Development Report (HDR) for 1990 suggested several social and economic indicators to reflect the extent of poverty in individual countries. Poverty levels may be different between women and men, among different ethnic groups, and between regional and metropolitan areas in a country (UNDP, 2003). The number of people below the poverty line is increasing in developing countries along with income inequalities (Jazairy, 1991 cited in Basu and Basu, 2005, p.57). The income gap between the richest 20 per cent of the population in the richest countries in the world and the poorest 20 per cent in the poorest countries is widening very fast. The difference was 30 times in 1960, and it increased to 74 times in 1997 (UNDP, 2003).

In social research, the concept of poverty was first introduced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the most influential survey was conducted by Booth (*Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1889) and Rowntree (*Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, 1901). Ruggeri et al. (2003, p.7-8) state that,

> *Booth's study of the East End of London, in 1887, was prompted by widespread rioting by the poor, which socialists explained at the time by the claim that one-third of the population (30 per cent) was poor. This was a much higher proportion than the rate of poverty as defined by those in receipt of poor-relief, which amounted to about five per cent' (Booth, 1887). Booth used informants (school board visitors) rather than direct enquiry among the poor. He categorized people into eight social classes, four of which represented different degrees of poverty. His classification went beyond a pure monetary identification of the poor, encompassing more sociological concerns such as the 'conditions attaining in the home, and the nature and regularity of employment'* (Marshall, 1981, p.145 cited in Ruggeri et.al., 2003, p. 8)

Booth classified the poor into two categories- 'poor' and 'very poor'. *The 'poor' are those whose means may be sufficient, but are barely sufficient, for decent independent life; the 'very poor' those whose means are insufficient for this according to the usual standard of life in this country* (Booth, 1971, p.55). Discussing this, Spicker (1990, p. 21) argues that 'Booth's definition of poverty was explicitly relative. Indeed, the description of poverty was based on class rather than income. He did not attempt to define need, or to identify subsistence levels of income on the basis of minimum needs; his "poverty line" was used as an indicator of poverty, not a definition'.

In this context, B. Seebohm Rowntree (1901) conducted a survey of 11,000 households in York to see if the extent of poverty in York was as great as that discovered by Booth in London (Alcock, 2006, p.11). Rowntree distinguishes two types of poverty. 'Primary poverty' is the result of the death of the chief wage-earner; incapacity of the chief wage-earner through accident, illness, or old age; the chief wage-earner being out of work or experiencing chronic irregularity of work; largeness of family and lowness of wage. 'Secondary poverty' is the result of habit – drink; betting and gambling; and careless housekeeping or improvident expenditure (Rowntree, 1901). Rowntree defines a poverty line by estimating the amount of

money needed for a nutritionally adequate diet together with needs for clothing and rent. Those who are below this line are defined as being in primary poverty. The interviewers put households who were seen to be living in 'obvious want and squalor', despite being above the defined poverty line, into the category of secondary poverty. On the basis of interviews with people around York, Rowntree identified 28 per cent of the population as in poverty. Rowntree's (1901) work has been described as the first scientific study of poverty in the world (Ruggeri et. al., 2003). However, it can be argued that Rowntree (1901) established an absolute subsistence definition of poverty which was subsequently challenged by Townsend's relativist approach.

After this, Tawney (1913, p.12) argued that, 'The problem of poverty . . . is not a problem of individual character and its waywardness, but a problem of economic and industrial organisation. It has to be studied first at its sources, and only secondly in its manifestations'. Moreover, he argued that 'problems of poverty' should be approached as 'problems of industry', with the trade, town, or school as the unit of enquiry rather than the individual or family. Thus, in his view, modern poverty was not associated with personal misfortunes, but with the economic status of classes and occupations (Welshman, 2004). Tawney also believed that the capacity of individuals to resist misfortune depended on the 'habits of life' and economic resources that they had acquired before disaster struck (Tawney, 1913, p.12 cited in Titmuss, 1958).

In the early part of the twentieth century, the London School of Economics (LSE), developed further research on poverty with the support of the Ratan Tata Foundation, including the work of Bowley and Burnett-Hurst (1915) and Tawney (1913 and 1931) (Alcock, 2006). Gazeley and Newell (2000 & 2007, p.6) state that, 'Bowley developed Rowntree's primary poverty measure in his analysis of poverty in Northern towns just before the First World War. Bowley believed that Rowntree's standard was too harsh, as it included no allowance for the consumption of meat in the diet. Bowley's new standard also revised Rowntree's merely physical efficiency standard by adjusting for price changes between 1899 and 1912 and revising the relative costs of children, whom Bowley believed Rowntree had treated too generously'.

Poverty was 'rediscovered' (Jordan, 1996) in the United States by Harrington (1962)

and in Britain by Townsend & Abel-Smith (1965). Townsend (1993) defines poverty in terms of 'relative deprivation' as:

> *A state of observable and demonstrable disadvantage relative to the local community or the wider society or nation to which an individual, family or group belongs. The idea has come to be applied to conditions (that is, physical, environmental and social states and circumstances) rather than resources* (Townsend, 1993, p.79).

Townsend (1979) distinguishes two types of deprivation:

- material deprivation (relating to food, clothing, housing and so on)

- social deprivation (associated with family, recreation and education).

Townsend criticises the use of the basic needs concept, the minimum consumption basket, and the concept of absolute deprivation, and emphasises the concept of relative deprivation, in which the poverty line is set not as an absolute minimum but depending on the country's wealth. Basically, the major focus of Townsend's approach to poverty is on social interaction rather than material aspects, and this is of interest in developed nations like the United Kingdom. In this perspective, de Hann (1999) argues that the notion of 'relative deprivation' is more closely related to a concept of social exclusion, and it is often noted that rising inequality in various countries has contributed to the popularity of the notion of social exclusion.

Concomitantly, Sen's work on capabilities and entitlements (1981) argues that Townsend's concept confuses the lack of commodities with the individual's or household's capabilities to meet social conventions, participate in social activities, and retain self respect (cited in de Hann, 1999). Thus, Sen (1983) argues that, poverty is the lack of capability to function in a given society.

Clark (2006) notes that Sen has developed, refined and defended a framework that is directly concerned with human capability and freedom (e.g. Sen, 1980; 1984; 1985; 1987; 1992; 1999). Sen's ideas acknowledged strong connections to Adam Smith's (1776) analysis of 'necessities' and living conditions and Karl Marx's (1844) concern with human freedom and emancipation. Later, Sen (1993) recognised that the most powerful conceptual connections (which he initially failed to appreciate)

relate to Aristotle's theory of 'political distribution' and his analysis of *eudaimonia* – human flourishing (Nussbaum, 1988; 1990, cited in Clark, 2006).

There are many debates on the historical origin of the concept of social exclusion, although most of the existing literature agrees that the term 'exclusion' first emerged in the nineteenth century and entered into the discussion of social issues in various poverty studies (Gore et al., 1995, Silver, 1994 and Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). On the other hand, Lister (2004) argues that Weber's (1968) idea of 'social closure' provides the theoretical roots of social exclusion, as  social closure is defined as, 'The process by which collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligible'. This entails the singling out of certain social or physical attributes as the justificatory basis of exclusion (Weber, 1968, p.342).

Many of the debates on social exclusion point out that René Lenoir, Secretary of State for Social Action in the Chirac government in France, first introduced the term 'social exclusion' in his book *Les Exclus: un francais sur dix* (1974). Lenoir describes as socially excluded those who are not protected by the welfare state and are considered social misfits. The mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, the aged and invalid, drug abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial people and so on are socially excluded (Lenoir, 1974, cited in Silver, 1994; Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). On this understanding, social exclusion has been identified as a process of 'social disqualification' (Paugam, 1993) or 'social disaffiliation' (Castel, 1995) leading to a breakdown of the relationship between society and the individual (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). It could be argued that the issue of poverty is not automatically part of these issues, as Lenoir (1974) only identifies socially excluded groups in terms of incapacity to work. However, there are some groups in society who are excluded not only because of lack of participation in the labour market, but because of lack of material resources, their need for social services and support, and so on.

The French notion of social exclusion is linked to a tradition where integration is achieved through key state institutions (Ion, 1995, p.67). However Byrne (2005) argues that the concept of integration was developed in relation to the idea of citizenship by Marshall (1950). Thus social exclusion can be viewed as a failure of

the Republic to protect 'the cohesion of the society' (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). In contradiction to French Republican ideas, the Anglo-Saxon tradition sees social integration in terms of freely chosen relationships between individuals rather than a relationship between the individual and society (Silver, 1994, p.18). In this regard, Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) state that in the nineteenth century a new type of poverty resulted from modernization and industrialization and this produced social tensions affecting the working class. Various measures like the enforcement of factory legislation, social insurance and the institutionalisation of industrial relations were introduced in industrialized countries to counter these social tensions. In this situation, 'exclusion was viewed mostly as a political phenomenon resulting from the under-representation of the working class in political institutions' (ibid, 1997, p.1).

The concept of social exclusion has been widely adopted by development agencies, and in development studies, notably since the World Social Summit (1995), as another way of understanding and reducing poverty in the South (Jackson, 1999). The United Nations Development Programme has been at the forefront of attempts to conceptualize social exclusion across the developed and developing world (Figueiredo and Gore, 1997). The European Commission emphasizes the idea that each citizen has the right to a certain basic standard of living and the right to participate in the major social and occupational institutions of their society – employment, housing, health care, education, and so on. Social exclusion occurs when citizens suffer from disadvantage and are unable to secure these social rights (European Commission, 1992, p.7).

## 3.3 Defining poverty and social exclusion

The notion of exclusion has long been debated by sociologists and political economists such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber. These scholars attempt to explain the cohesion and social solidarity, and the alienation and social exclusion that arise from the transformation of mainly rural communities in Europe and America into urbanized and modern industrial societies (Wilson, 2006). In policy discourse, social exclusion has emerged from both the traditional left and right wing of the political spectrum where left-wing stance views exclusion with poverty and the material consequences of deprivation and right-wing stance associates exclusion with immorality and work-shyness (Williams, 2006).

Platt states that 'Social relations are at the heart of understandings of social exclusion in the UK (Levitas, 2006), but in Europe, participation (or its lack) is largely identified with labour market participation (Levitas, 1998)' (cited in Platt, 2009, p.670). In addition, Levitas (2005, p.21) states that social exclusion has been linked with the underclass where ethnic diversity enters into the discussion of excluded groups in a particular society. The debates of social exclusion in the UK have highlighted concentrations of deprivation at neighbourhood level (Platt, 2009, p.671). This means that conceptual and definitional disagreements arise in discussions of social exclusion and inclusion.

Similarly, there has been much debate about 'absolute' and 'relative' definitions of poverty and the difficulties involved in comparing poverty in industrialised countries with that in the developing world. Sen (1981) has noted that:

> *In understanding general poverty, or regular starvation, or outbursts of famines, it is necessary to look at both ownership patterns and exchange entitlements, and at the forces that lie behind them. This requires a careful consideration of the nature of the modes of production and the structure of economic classes as well as their interrelations* (1981, p.6).

However, these debates were resolved in 1995 at the UN World Summit on Social Development. At this Summit, the governments of 117 countries – including the UK Government — agreed on two definitions of poverty: absolute poverty and overall poverty. They adopted a declaration and programme of action which included commitments to eradicate absolute poverty by 2015 and also reduce overall poverty, by at least half, by the same year (UN, 1995).

In relation to the above debate, this research questions how poverty and social exclusion can be defined in Bangladesh. As poverty and social exclusion is identified as a 'contested' concept (Levitas, 2005, p.3) with multiple meanings, this research has been accomplished with various definitions of poverty and social exclusion, which are highlighted in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

**Table: 3.1 selected definitions of poverty**

| Author | Definition of poverty |
|---|---|
| Peter Townsend (1979:32) | Poverty should not be understood in terms of subsistence, but in terms of people's ability to participate in the customary life of society: 'Individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty when ... their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities'. |
| Sen (1993, p.41) | In the Capability Approach (CA), poverty is defined as deprivation, or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities, where 'basic capabilities' are 'the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels. |
| United Nations Economic and Social Council (1998) | Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. |
| World Bank (2000) | Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life. |
| IMF Country Report (2004, p.16) | Poverty is extreme discrimination in terms of balanced diet, clothing, education, health, housing, achieving wealth, enjoying an equal right to social and political activities, and getting justice. Poverty means being deprived of those basic needs that are acknowledged by the constitution. |

In Bangladesh, poverty refers to various forms of economic, social and psychological deprivation among people who lack adequate ownership of, control of, or access to resources for achieving a minimum level of living. It is a multi-dimensional problem involving income, consumption, nutrition, health, education, housing, crisis coping capacity, access to credit and other aspects of living (BBS, 2004, p.7). In the light of this understanding, this research explains how absolute poverty can be tackled with regard to identifying the processes of social exclusion and inclusion among

indigenous people, especially women, in Bangladesh. Therefore, I agreed with Powell (1995, pp.22-23) that, 'Association of poverty with a more divided society has led to the broader concept of social exclusion, which refers not only to material deprivation, but to the inability of the poor to fully exercise their social, cultural and political rights as citizens'.

Ringen states that, 'Poverty can be defined either directly (in terms of consumption) or indirectly (in terms of income)' (Ringen, 1988, p.351). The deprivation definition of poverty (i.e. in terms of lower levels of consumption or resources) is a direct definition; and the subsistence definition (i.e. in terms of minimum levels of consumption or resources) is an indirect definition. This research has been accomplished using an indirect definition of poverty in its analysis of the processes of social exclusion in Bangladesh where it particularly highlights the various forms poverty among indigenous people in Bangladesh.

Silver (1994) identifies three major paradigms of exclusion: firstly, the **solidarity paradigm,** which explains exclusion in terms of lack of social ties between individuals and society (developed in French Republican ideas); secondly, the **specialization paradigm,** where exclusion is described by various distortions, namely discrimination, market failures and unenforced rights (formulated by the school of liberal thought in the United States); and finally the **monopoly paradigm,** where exclusion is explained in terms of some groups (so called insiders) controlling or monopolizing resources to their advantage (dominant in Western Europe) (Silver, 1994). Hence the monopoly paradigm (Silver, 1994) is quite close to Weber's theory of 'social closure' (Parkin, 1979). Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997, p.7) state that, 'Exclusion may reflect voluntary individual choices, patterns of interests or a contractual relationship between actors, or "distortions" to the system, such as discrimination, market failures and/or unenforced rights'. Avramov (2002) states that exclusion is, as a rule, associated with social stigmatisation, an element of blame and isolation which translates into low self-esteem, the feeling of not belonging and not having been given a chance to be part of society. This research engaged with the idea of solidarity and specialization paradigm whereas the processes of social exclusion explained how matrilineal (Garo community) and patriarchal (Chakma community) indigenous groups and mainstream society may prohibit or constraints women's entry into wider society.

Atkinson (1998) has identified three main elements of social exclusion: first, **relativity,** i.e. social exclusion is relative to a particular society, at a particular place and time; secondly, **agency,** i.e. it is the result of an act or acts by an agent or agency; finally **dynamics,** i.e. it shows that people are excluded not just because of their current situation, but also because they have few prospects for the future (Atkinson, 1998).

Similarly, social exclusion introduces a spatial dimension to capturing the interplay between economic deprivation and social discrimination. On this point, Beall (2002) notes, 'Spatial disadvantage may lie in the remoteness and isolation of a location which makes it physically difficult for its inhabitants to participate in broader socio-economic processes or it may operate through the segregation of urban environments and the subcultures of violence, criminality, drug dependence and squalor which often characterise the territorially excluded neighbourhoods' (cited in Kaber, 2005, p.3).

**Table: 3.2 definitions of social exclusion**

| Author | Definition of Social Exclusion |
|---|---|
| Room (1995) | Social exclusion refers to multi-dimensional disadvantage as well as relational – concerning inadequate social participation, lack of social integration, and lack of power. |
| European Foundation, (1995) and de Haan, (1998) | Social exclusion is the processes through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live. |
| European Union (2004) | Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives. |
| DFID (2005, p. 3) | Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. |
| Kabeer (2005, p.3) | Social exclusion is the overlapping of two types of disadvantageous experience – lack of resources (what you have) and identity-based discrimination (who you are) – where individuals and groups experience their poverty or discrimination by virtue of their identity and the undermining of their capacity to participate in the economic, social and political functionings of their society on equal terms. |
| Silver (2007) | The process of social exclusion reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration at both the societal and the individual level. It represents an inability to participate in normatively expected social activities and to establish meaningful social relations. |
| Levitas et al, (2007, p.9) | Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole. |

From these definitions of social exclusion, it can be argued that social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional notion. Ward (2009, p.239) argued that 'many factors contribute to the process of social exclusion whilst also indicating that these factors may be both material (income, housing, goods and services) and discursive (discrimination, relationships)'. Therefore, the **operational definition** of social exclusion for this study is as follows:

> *Social exclusion refers to a condition of deprivation that affects individuals and societies due to unfavourable social conditions. It is the experience by people (in this case indigenous people) of objective deprivation and subjective dissatisfaction with their life chances, due to a lack of social participation, social integration, power or political participation, and access to collective resources such as educational facilities, family and informal networks, consumer goods and services, and leisure and recreation.*

The analysis of social exclusion draws our attention to the structural changes needed in society and institutional policy. This thesis uses a notion of 'social

inclusion' in which this concept is taken to be the antithesis of social exclusion (Chirwa, 2002), and it uses it to challenge the processes of social exclusion in indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Similarly, social inclusion, for the indigenous communities of Bangladesh, means enhancing their self-identity, cultural and social life, and participation in decision-making processes within their households and at a community level.

This study accepts the definition of social inclusion formulated by the World Bank, which defines it as, 'the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to public capital and services, and development opportunities' (Bennett, 2002 and DFID/World Bank 2005, p.5). Therefore, this research frames the operational definition of social inclusion as:

> A process of full or partial integration into the society in which one lives and, to a lesser extent, into the wider society. It includes being allowed space to realize one's rights, pursue a living, and take full part in all the affairs of life.

This means that the processes of social inclusion sustain indigenous people's, especially women's, benefits by preventing them from becoming excluded and assisting them to integrate into wider society.

## 3.4 Poverty and social exclusion: comparing and contrasting notions

There is a lot of literature dealing with identifying the concept of poverty linked with social exclusion. Definitions of poverty and social exclusion are debatable issues, as the phenomenon is identified with various indicators and drivers. From this point of view, I can argue poverty and social exclusion; both concepts are multidimensional and multifaceted. de Hann (1998) argues that social exclusion is a cause of poverty; others suggest that it is both an expression and a determinant of poverty; and most social scientists would probably agree that poverty is a form of social exclusion (de Haan, 1998 cited in Jackson, 1999). Jackson states that social exclusion paradigms place poverty as one element in the marginalisation processes producing vulnerable groups which experience disadvantage in complex material, cultural and socio-political ways (Jackson, 1999, p.126).

Sen (2000) approaches social exclusion through a broad framework of freedom and capabilities to explain the causal as well as constitutive processes of poverty and deprivation. Following Sen's idea of capability perspectives, Osmani (2003) states that exclusion only adds the relational aspect that enriches the analysis of poverty and then he recognizes that individuals are often excluded due to causes that are independent of their poverty. Zohir et al. (2008, p.4) state that, 'Osmani draws upon Sen's broad explanation of exclusion to investigate on who are excluded and why; where exclusion is explained in terms of poverty'. Thus, Zohir et al. (2008) state that social exclusion is considered both a constitutive part of capability deprivation and an instrumental cause of capability failure. Lister (2004) identifies social exclusion as a travelling concept in political and academic debates. Similarly, Nevile (2007, p.250) states that the concept of social exclusion does have something to offer those interested in the analysis of chronic poverty in developing societies.

The concept of social exclusion has wide applicability in a broader view of deprivation and disadvantage which is often overlooked in traditional approaches to poverty in the developing world (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1999). It can be argued that the structural theory of poverty could explain the processes of exclusion in developing countries like Bangladesh. An analysis of social exclusion may indicate the causes, processes and consequences of poverty as well as the way the discourse of poverty is constructed and how deprived people react in a variety of ways to their situation (Islam, 2005). Islam also argues that, 'The perspective of social exclusion can be deployed fruitfully in the South for a coherent analysis of poverty and blueprinting consistent with anti-poverty policy measures. Most importantly, it allows scope for a more relational and comprehensive analysis of poverty' (Islam, 2005, p.5). At the same time, in line with the findings of Rodgers (1994), Kabeer (2005) and Silver (2007), this research offers a multi-dimensional analysis of the nature of social exclusion along with a multi-disciplinary view of poverty. This thesis particularly looks at the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in terms of structural poverty, which is explained within the framework of the capability approach (CA).

As I have stated, there is no comprehensive study of social exclusion, but there is an extensive study literature on poverty in Bangladesh. Indeed, the concepts of poverty and social exclusion are widely considered to be closely related and overlapping (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2008). It could be argued

that, historically, the concept of social exclusion has dominated in western societies (developed societies). However, recent literature on exclusion in developing countries has sought to redefine the originally western concept of exclusion in terms of the developing world (e.g. Saith, 2001; Sen, 2000; Kabeer, 2000 cited in Zohir et al., 2008). Thus, Zohir et al. (2008, p.2) argue that, 'There are instances of exclusion which exist in the absence of poverty; and there are instances of poverty which may not be rooted in social exclusion. Once the concept of exclusion is broadened beyond social exclusion, one may hardly find an instance of poverty which is not associated with some form of exclusion'.

Social exclusion paradigms show poverty as one element in the marginalisation processes producing vulnerable groups who experience disadvantage in complex material, cultural and socio-political ways (Jackson, 1999). Even though gender analysis is integrated into poverty discourse and policies (Jackson, 1996; Kabeer, 1997; Razaivi, 1997), it is suggested that the politics of integration can have problematic consequences and debase the insights gained from attending to specific forms of social differentiation (Jackson, 1999).

In this perspective, Saunders (2003) suggests that the concept of exclusion should be incorporated into the measurement of poverty and policy formulation. Accordingly, Shafie and Kilby (2003) conducted a research study to identify the problems of indigenous communities in Northwest Bangladesh. They argue that processes of discrimination and exploitation have led to the exclusion and marginalization of indigenous communities (Adibashi or tribal people) in Northwest Bangladesh. The authors argue that ethnic identities in the region are hierarchically ranked, creating barriers to indigenous people's inclusion in wider social networks. Shafie and Kilby (2003) try to establish the connection between social exclusion and the idea of 'poverty as capability deprivation'. They state that, 'Poverty among the *adibashis* (indigenous people) is associated with the interplay of complex interdependent factors like ethnic inequality, enduring discrimination, lack of education, little access to land, a low degree of market integration, loss of labour-power potential and lack of employment in the vibrant off-farm rural sector' (Shafie and Kilby 2003, p.11). Therefore, they are socially isolated, with little access to mainstream economic and political spheres in Bangladesh' (ibid, 2003). Another study puts forward the idea that the Garo people now come into contact with Bengali society frequently and so they

are likely to adopt many aspects of Bengali culture, such as dress styles, food habits and language. As a result, they have lost many of their traditional customs and practices under the influence of the majority population of Bangladesh (Chamon Ara, 2004). With this idea in mind, this research will investigate how social exclusion and inclusion influence indigenous women's personal, socio-cultural, economic and political life within their own communities and within mainstream society in Bangladesh. It might be argued that indigenous people need to cope with life lived in relation to the majority Bengali community. Therefore, this research argues that the processes of social exclusion could be examined in the broader context of structural inequality (economic inequality, lack of opportunity, lack of political participation, discrimination in public services and rights, patriarchy and unequal decision-making roles, and so on) with the theoretical support of the capability approach (CA) developed by Amartya Sen that will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Sen (1993) argues that the concept of social exclusion has been linked to notions of relative poverty. Social exclusion is not coterminous with poverty (e.g. it is possible to be excluded without being poor), but many poor people are excluded; and focusing attention on exclusion allows a broader view of deprivation and disadvantage than is allowed by a more narrowly conceived consideration of poverty (de Hann, 1998).  A key claim for the use of the concept of social exclusion within development studies is that it offers a means of grounding the understanding of deprivation firmly in traditions of social science analysis (de Haan, 1999, p.1). Thus, Alcock (2006, p.68) argues that, 'The absolute definitions of poverty necessarily involve relative judgement to apply them to any particular society; and relative definitions require some absolute core in order to distinguish them from broader inequalities'.

From the above discussion, I agreed with Levitas (2005, p.7) that 'social exclusion is embedded in different discourses' and the contested nature of poverty and social exclusion intertwined with both material (economic, education, health) and discursive (personal, socio-cultural, identity and political aspects) perspective for this research. Therefore, this research provides a material discursive perspective for analysing the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh.  In particular, this research responses a broader analysis of the causes and conditions

of inequality and marginalization than poverty, additionally it highlights with the relational perspective of become excluded from wider society.

## 3.5 Theoretical framework: poverty, gender and social exclusion

In the first chapter, it was explained that this thesis would focus on the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in indigenous communities in Bangladesh, especially among indigenous women in matrilineal and patriarchal social settings. It was previously stated that the traditional society of Bangladesh is permeated with patriarchal values and norms of female subordination, subservience, subjugation and segregation (Islam and Sultana, 2006). For this reason, Bengali women, especially rural women, could be considered more vulnerable than ethnic minority women in terms of deprivation and structural inequality at the domestic and wider societal levels. Moreover, the Constitution of Bangladesh has failed to guarantee women's equal opportunities, as well as their safety, in every formal and informal sector, irrespective of their race, caste or place of birth (Halim, 2005, p. 70). In this context, I agree with Momsen that 'research on women in developing countries challenged the most fundamental assumptions of international development, added a gender dimension to the study of the development process and demanded a new theoretical approach (Momsen, 2010, p 11).

The study of poverty can be approached under different headings, including livelihood, human rights, basic needs, human capital (capability), human resources, economic growth, social exclusion and participation (Dini, 2009). This research works with three major theoretical concepts – gender, social exclusion and poverty – and these concepts are used together with the idea of a capability approach, as Sen argues that, 'Deprived groups may be habituated to inequality, may be unaware of possibilities of social change, may lack hope about raising human beings above their objective circumstances of misery, may be resigned to their fate, and may well be willing to accept the legitimacy of the established order' (Sen, 1990, p.127).

Of the capability approach, Robeyns (2003) states that its core characteristic is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and be, that is, on their capabilities. He also argues that the capability approach is a broad normative framework for the

evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, and for the design of policies and proposals concerning social change in society.

The capability approach has been developed by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (Sen 1980; 1984; 1985a; 1985b; 1987; 1992; 1993; 1995; Drèze and Sen 2002), and more recently it has been significantly extended by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 1988; 1992; 1995; 2000; 2002b; 2003 cited in Robeyn, 2003, p.5). It could be argued that Sen's capability approach has focused on poverty, inequality and well-being, but Nussbaum used this approach as the foundation for a partial theory of justice (Robeyns, 2003).

As this thesis highlights gender inequality with regard to poverty and social exclusion at the domestic and wider societal levels, the capability approach is considered appropriate for identifying the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in marginalized societies in Bangladesh. Therefore, we need to understand the core aspects of the capability approach (see Diagram 3.2), which is briefly explained in the following parts of this chapter.

**Figure 3.2 Core aspects of the capability approach**
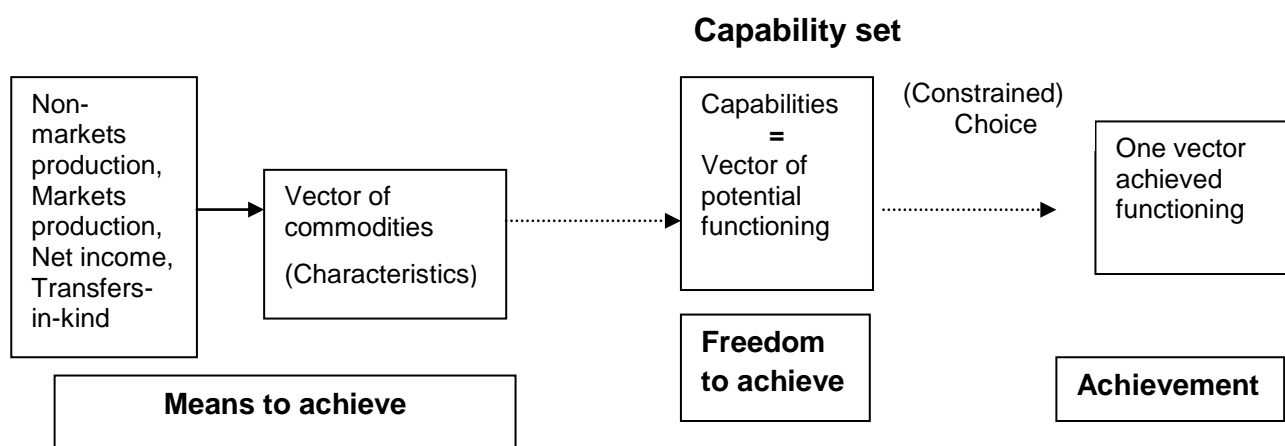


**Source: Adapted from Robeyns, 2003**

**Commodity**

Sen (1983) begins with the idea of commodity command, which means the obtaining of goods and services for well-being in life. He argues that economic growth and resources are necessary for human development. However, like Aristotle, he reiterates the familiar argument that, '...wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else' (Sen, 1990, p.44).

Sen maintains that the quality of life depends on the ability of people to achieve, though this varies as peoples and societies typically differ in their capacity to convert income and commodities into valuable achievements. For example, 'A disabled person may require extra resources (wheel chairs, ramps, lifts, etc) to achieve the same things (moving around) as an able bodied person. Moreover, a child typically has very different nutritional requirements from a manual labourer, pregnant woman or someone with a parasitic disease' (Clark, 2005, p.3). Similarly, the commodity requirements for more complex social achievements (such as appearing in public without shame or entertaining family and friends) typically depend on cultural factors such as social convention and custom or status and class, inter alia (Sen 1985, pp.25-26 & 1999, pp.70-71 cited in Clark, 2005, p.3). In this research, commodity indicates the characteristics of social and economic achievement, such as education, political participation, social cohesion and labour market participation. From the notion of a vector of commodities, this research focuses on indigenous women's role in terms of funtionings which are linked with the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of life. It could be argued that the vector of commodities determines the potential capabilities for individual well-being.

**Capability**

Capability is a set of vectors of functionings reflecting a person's freedom to lead one type of life or another (Sen 1992). Capabilities provide the opportunities for the achievement of well-being. Robeyns (2003, p.63) states that, 'All capabilities together correspond to the overall freedom to lead the life that a person has reason to value'. Sen (1999) argues that capability is a kind of freedom which may be achieved through various life styles and endowments (a person's assets, their employability, and so on). It could be argued that the capability set is the most important component of this approach, since it reveals a person's ability to function. Oughton and Wheelock (2003) argue that the way in which an individual may use these endowments is governed by entitlements mediated by legal and social rights. In this way, endowments are converted (via entitlements) into livelihood capabilities through the formal and informal regulatory institutions governing the behaviour of individuals and households (Oughton and Wheelock, 2003). They also argue that, in a broader approach, these joint endowments affected both extra- and intra-household relations through power, norms and values.

This study explores gendered power relations (such as gender inequality) and the extent of social exclusion as a consequence of patriarchal and matrilineal society. But these power relations may also include other factors: in particular, insecurity, social infrastructure and social taboo. In this context, Sen argues that:

> *The question of gender inequality . . . can be understood much better by comparing those things that intrinsically matter (such as functionings and capabilities), rather than just the means like . . . resources. The issue of gender inequality is ultimately one of disparate freedoms* (Sen 1992, p.125).

In other words, the notion of capability is effectively used as a synonym for the capability set (Qizilbash, 2005). Sen (1999) explains that:

> *The capability set is a set of real possibilities open to the individual/ household, representing an opportunity for choice which may or may not be realized. The choices that are realized, the actual achievement, 'reflects the various things a person may value doing or being' (cited in Oughton and Wheelock, 2003).*

Sen presents this actual achievement in the 'chosen functioning vector' (Sen, 1999, p.76). Thus it is the lack of capability that makes a person poor, and this lack is absolute, and constitutes poverty (Alcock, 2006). This approach can be seen as explaining the exclusionary processes that deny indigenous people, especially women, access to certain services at the domestic and wider societal levels.

**Functionings**

Functionings represent aspects of an individual's situation – in particular the various things that he or she manages to do (doings) or be (beings) in their life. The capability of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings that an individual can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection (Sen, 1993).

According to Clark (2005, p.4), 'Achieving a functioning (e.g. being adequately nourished) with a given bundle of commodities (e.g. bread or rice) depends on a range of personal and social factors (e.g. metabolic rates, body size, age, gender, activity levels, health, access to medical services, nutritional knowledge and education, climatic conditions, etc)'. Robeyns (2003, p.63) states that 'the difference

between a functioning and a capability is similar to the difference between an achievement and the freedom to achieve something, or between an outcome and an opportunity'.

In this study, funtionings represent the notion of participation at the social, economic and political levels and women's decision-making roles at the domestic and wider societal levels that are embodied in indigenous women's empowerment, integration and freedom of expression. Agarwal (1997, p.1) argues that, 'The nature of gender relations is not only revealed in the division of labour and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and representations – the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns, and so on'. As a result, a complete analysis of gender inequality should not only map the gender inequalities in functionings and capabilities, but also analyze which inequalities in resources cause gender inequalities in capabilities and functionings (Agarwal, 1997). In this perspective, this research highlights the personal, socio-cultural, and political aspects of indigenous women's lives as well as their employment and their opportunities for individual well-being.

**Utility**

Sen (1985) challenges the welfare or utility approach, which concentrates on happiness, pleasure and desire-fulfilment. A utilitarian evaluation will only assess a person's satisfaction and will not differentiate between a happy, healthy, well-sheltered person, and an equally happy, but unhealthy and poorly sheltered person who has mentally adapted to her situation (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 1984; Clark, 2003 and Robeyns, 2003). Robeyns (2003, p.63) argues that the idea of 'utility' provides a general framework within which gender inequality can be described. However, Sen has criticized inequality approaches that assume that all people have the same utility functions or are influenced in the same way and to the same extent by the same personal, social, and environmental characteristics (Sen 1992: xi cited in Robeyns, 2003). He states that, 'Utility can be easily swayed by mental conditioning or adaptive expectations' (Sen, 1999, p.62). In this research, the notion of utility could be used to explain indigenous women's life styles in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh whereas utility measure the nature of wellbeing through multiple processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

I agree with Poggi (2003) that social exclusion can be seen as a part of Sen's capability approach and it can be defined as a process leading to a state of functioning deprivations. Similarly, Robeyns (2005, p.2) states that, 'Amartya Sen's capability approach has attracted much attention recently, both in development and welfare economics, as well as more broadly in the social sciences and humanities'. The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about societal change. It can be used to empirically assess aspects of an individual's or groups' well-being, such as inequality or poverty'. He also argues that:

> *The capability approach is not a theory that can explain poverty, inequality or well-being; instead, it provides concepts and a framework that can help to conceptualize and evaluate these phenomena* (Robeyns, 2008, p.3).

In this framework, poverty is defined as deprivation in the terms of the capability approach, or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities where basic capabilities are, 'the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels' (Sen, 1993, p.41). I would argue that the capability approach can focus on individual, micro and macro levels of poverty, whereas the social exclusion approach focuses on the social and macro levels of poverty. Therefore, this research has been carried out using Sen's capability approach as a theoretical model to explain the processes of social exclusion in indigenous women in Bangladesh. In addition, Sen's approach provides support in exploring the links between gender, ethnicity and poverty. Furthermore, 'The capability approach will always focus on inequalities *within* a particular community or society, like restrictive gender norms, which may make it much more difficult for a woman to convert resources into functionings than for a man' (Robeyns, 2005, p.2). The following diagram (see Diagram 3.3) explains how social exclusion can be analysed with the support of the capability approach.

**Diagram 3.3: Capability approach, poverty and social exclusion and inclusion**
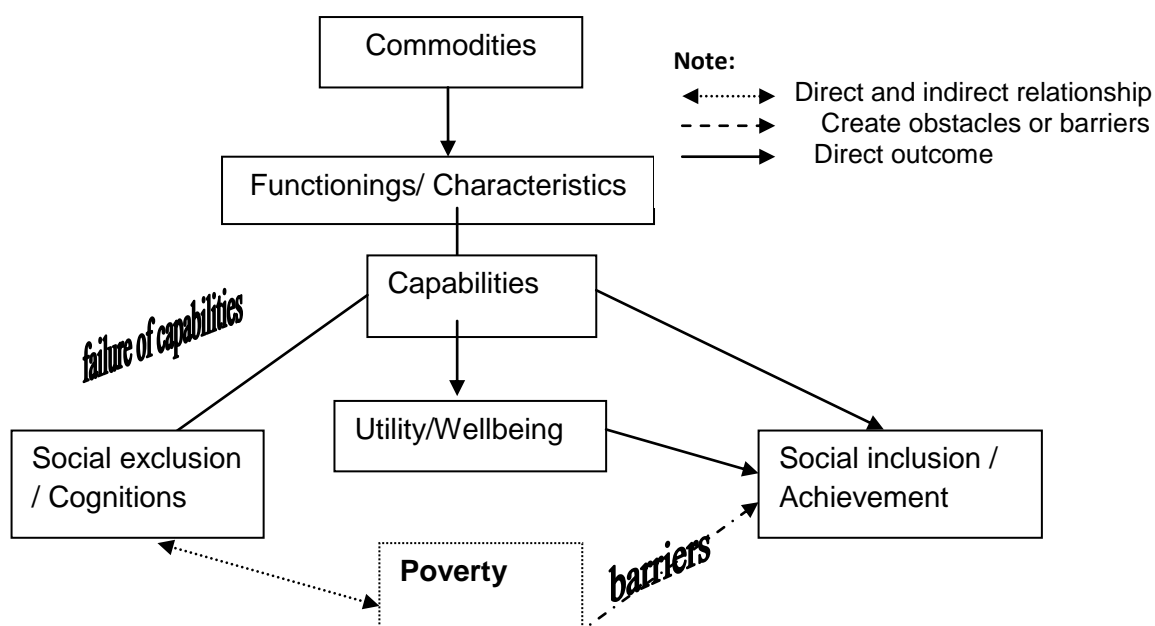


The diagram indicates that a failure of capabilities directly or indirectly leads to social exclusion and poverty, whereas the presence of capabilities provides an opportunity for the achievement of well-being and fosters social inclusion. In addition, it indicates that if resources and money cannot be commodified (commodities = vector of functionings) by functionings, then individual well-being will be constrained by capability deprivation and create social exclusion. In this regard, Sen states:

> *The perspective of capability-poverty does not involve any denial of the sensible view that low income is clearly a major factor in poverty, since lack of income can be a principal for a person's capability deprivation* (Sen, 1999, p.87).

In his work Sen does not provide a specific list of minimally essential capabilities (though he suggests that basic concerns such as being well-nourished, avoiding preventable morbidity, etc. should be part of such a list) or guidelines for drawing up a universal list. 'The capability approach would provide useful guidance if Sen provided a definite list of the most central capabilities, even one that was tentative and revisable' (Nussbaum 2003, p.36). To fill this gap, Nussbaum proposes a list of ten central human capabilities, such as life, bodily health, bodily integrity, use of all the senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reasoning, affiliation, integration with other species, an opportunity for play, and control over one's

environment (Nussbaum 2000; 2002a; 2002b; 2003 cited in Robeyns, 2002, p. 25). Similarly, some economists, like Robert Sugden or John Roeme, argue that since Sen's capability approach does not provide a list of the most important functionings, every evaluative exercise carried out using the capability framework will require an additional selection of functionings (cited in Robeyns, 2003).

To this criticism, Sen has responded that he does not want to endorse a specific list of functionings for two reasons: first, he wants to advance the capability approach as a general approach to the evaluation of individual advantage and social arrangements, and not as a well-defined theory; and second, the capability approach will always be combined with a particular selection of social theories (such as an account of human nature or the good life), and each specification may result in a different selection of valuable functionings. In the light of this argument, I agree with Robeyn that the capability approach has broad and less specific theoretical aims: it is only a framework, not a theory, and it should not be compared with Nussbaum's theory of a capability approach which is associated with a universal general list.

Alkire (2002) has argued that the lack of specification is deliberate in order to allow room for choice across societies and ensure the relevance of the approach to different peoples and cultures. Alkire (2002, p.170) observes that, 'The single most important function of the capability approach (CA) is to make explicit some implicit assumptions in the Basic Needs Approach (BNA) about the value of choice and participation (and the disvalue of coercion)'. However Ringen (1995, p.13) is critical of the fact that, 'The capabilities approach could be operationalized through a combination of resource variables, for example income, skills, social resources (social network); though resource-based theories do not acknowledge that people differ in their abilities to convert these resources into capabilities, due to personal, social or environmental factors, such as physical and mental handicaps, talents, traditions, social norms and customs, legal rules, a country's public infrastructure, public goods, climate, and so on'.

Sen (1992) has criticized inequality approaches that assume all people have the same utility functions or are influenced in the same way and to the same extent by the same personal, social, and environmental characteristics. He argues that human diversity (such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality and geographical location,

as well as whether people are handicapped, pregnant, or have caring responsibilities) is not a secondary complication (to be ignored or to be introduced 'later on'); it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in inequality (Sen, 1992, p.11). Therefore, it could be argued that the capability approach overcomes the weakness of the income approach without sacrificing its neutrality, since the full range of choice is described in terms of both personal resources and structural options i.e. actual, accessible opportunities. The capability approach represents a major contribution to poverty analysis because it provides a coherent framework for defining poverty in the context of the lives people live and the freedoms they enjoy.

The comprehensiveness of the capability approach prompts researchers to use qualitative methods and not just include quantitative data (Robeyns, 2005). Therefore Poggi (2003:5) argues for, '… social exclusion as the impossibility to achieve some relevant functionings. Since, the impossibility to reach a functioning leads to a state of deprivation, the "state" of social exclusion can be defined as a combination of some relevant deprivations'.

Since gender is created by society its meaning will vary from society to society and will change overtime. It could be argued that traditional patriarchal values predominantly motivate men to participate in the labour market, and are also the reason why women tend to be denied access to the labour market. In this regard, Bengali women, especially in rural areas, are likely to experience lack of freedom at the household and state levels.  Sen (2002) argues that individual freedom is essential for a country's development, because it stimulates people to create valuable resources. This research argues that indigenous women's freedoms are likely to be controlled by patriarchal values. As a result, even though they may participate in income-generating activities, indigenous women's economic contribution is often overlooked and they are thus not able to improve their status at the domestic and state levels. Momsen (2010, p.16) has argued that women have three roles in most parts of the world: reproduction, production and community management. The author criticized that participatory and community development models are often gender-blind and may just reinforce local patriarchal and elite control.

In this context, this research also focuses on the issue of women's empowerment. Kabeer (2002) argues that empowerment is the process of a change from being disempowered to having power. She says that a person who has plenty of opportunity to make choices, but has never been disempowered, may be powerful but has not been empowered. But a person who was disempowered in the first place and who has obtained the ability to make choices in life has been empowered. Further, Kabeer (2002) considers that if a person fails to achieve because of an unequal distribution of capabilities, this is seen as the person being disempowered.

Agarwal argues that women's overt compliance with social norms does not necessarily mean they have accepted the legitimacy of intra-household inequality; it might merely reflect their lack of options. She comments on Sen's idea, saying that she would 'place much less emphasis than Sen does on women's incorrect perceptions of their self-interest, and much more on the external constraints on their acting overtly in their self-interest' (Agarwal 1997, p.25).

Given this understanding, I would like to argue that indigenous women's activity tends to be controlled by patriarchal values. Consequently, unequal distribution of resources is more likely to exclude women from achieving valuable capabilities for their individual and group well-being. It could be argued that this distribution of resources is governed by men, who are likely to favour and motivate other men to gain valuable functioning powers. In this context, Sen (2002) states that it is of great importance to include women in the political, economic and social spheres of development, since human freedom is the main target and the most important tool for creating development.

## 3.6 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the definition of poverty and social exclusion in the context of the historical development of these notions. I argued that there is no comprehensive study on social exclusion in Bangladesh, and research on the extent of social exclusion and inclusion is very limited especially on gender perspective. Therefore, analysing gender and social exclusion and inclusion through the model of capability approach challenges the conventional measure of poverty (see Chapter 1) in Bangladesh and enhance a complex interplay between ethnic inequality and poverty among mainstream society and marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

Figueiredo and Gore (1997) have argued that the notion of social exclusion can lead to both a specific understanding of what poverty is (which includes welfare and agency aspects) and a specific understanding of how the processes of impoverishment occur; it may offer an alternative policy paradigm to existing approaches to poverty reduction through development policy in terms of its conception of poverty and its determinates.  Similarly, Saith (2001) argues that poverty research which formerly looked at landlessness now looks at exclusion from land; research that formerly looked at gender-, caste- or race-based discrimination now looks at exclusion on the basis of gender, caste or race; research that looked at access to health, nutrition, and education now looks at exclusion from basic rights or basic capabilities; studies on child labour are recast as looking at exclusion from a secure childhood; earlier studies on income or monetary poverty are recast as exclusion due to poverty. Thus the concept of 'social exclusion' has become a core concept in the European Union and was a foundational policy concept for Tony Blair's New Labour Government in 1997 in the UK (Peace, 2001). And it could be argued that the concept of social exclusion as it originated in Western Europe seems to have played a role in the re-opening of old debates and discussions in developing countries under new terminology (Saith, 2001). As regards this discussion, I have argued that the concepts of social exclusion and poverty are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.

The previous chapter addressed the fact that indigenous people, especially women, are likely to be consigned to exclude groups. They are deprived of basic capabilities such as identity, education, health, land rights and employment and economic opportunities, and thus they cannot achieve a state of well-being. In investigating the disadvantages and vulnerable positions of women, this thesis seeks to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in matrilineal and patriarchal indigenous communities vis-a-vis wider Bangladeshi society. Therefore, it is important to understand the social relations or social processes of particular communities, as these determine the nature of deprivation for excluded groups in the basic personal, socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of their life.  De Hann (1999) states that, 'A social exclusion framework is primarily an analytical framework for understanding society and deprivation, with context dependence – both of definitions

and of practices of exclusion and integration – as a central point of departure' (de Hann, 1999, p.19).

Accordingly, this chapter has looked at the theoretical understanding of the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen, as this has been used to investigate poverty, inequality, well-being, social justice, gender, social exclusion, health, disability, child poverty and identity (Clark, 2006, p.11). Here, I accept Robeyns' (2003) argument that the capability approach can be used to empirically assess aspects of an individual's or group's well-being, such as inequality or poverty, within a broad normative framework.

As Williams (1998, p.15) suggests that, 'whereas poverty studies emphasised class and distributional issues, social exclusion allows us to look at issues to do with social and cultural injustices generated by inequalities of gender, 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, age and disability; and it also examine the 'social relations of power and control' and the 'processes of marginalisation    and exclusion' (ibid, p. 14). For this reason, this thesis was developed to investigate the linked concepts of social exclusion and poverty in Bangladesh where capability approach offers an alternative view of social exclusion rather than income poor in an extreme poor country.

Sen (1990) argues that women in traditional societies may lack a notion of personal welfare because their identities are too closely tied to the interests of the household. In such contexts, I would like to argue that intra-household inequality is common in developing countries, like Bangladesh and often distinctly gendered. Therefore, in this study, capability approach draws our attention on economic deprivation, social discrimination and cultural devaluation of indigenous people, especially indigenous women that allow us to understand power structures and relations of individuals.  In this sense, I can argue that poverty should therefore be viewed not only as an absence of income, but as an obstacle to the exercise of an individual's capabilities in particular society.

At the same time, I argue that poverty can be seen as low levels of capability or 'the failure of basic capabilities to reach certain minimally acceptable levels' (Sen 1992, p.109). Thus, I agree with Osmani (2003) that social exclusion implies a failure of this capability; therefore, social exclusion constitutes poverty. In other words, from the capability perspective, social exclusion can be seen to have both constitutive and

instrumental relevance for poverty, as well as being a dimension of poverty (Osamai, 2003). As Kabeer (2003) notes, by increasing women's income (capabilities), women can have an increased number of choices, networking, greater household decision-making power, greater social status, and greater sense of confidence and independence. This means, women's empowerment (functioning) can enable women to oppose authoritative patriarchal power structures through collective action. This argument integrated with the gender and development (GAD) perspectives where 'women are seen as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development assistance' (Rathgeber, 1990, p.494) and gender inequalities emphasize on practical (what women require in order to fulfil their roles and tasks) and strategic (what women require in order to overcome their subordination) needs for women development.  With this understanding, I would like to argue that the constitutive perspective of social exclusion might be useful to explain the nature of poverty, and the instrumental perspective would highlight the causes of poverty from the capability perspective in relation to gender analysis for this study.

At the same time, the previous discussion of move from 'Women in Development (WID)' approaches to 'Gender and Development (GAD) approaches address the unequal power relationships between males and females which explains how socially excluded people, especially rural women, are often denied the opportunities available to others to increase their income and reduce their productive capacities in domestic and wider societal level. In this way, the capability approach enables us to examine the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people from mainstream society (Bengali people) as well as their own communities in Bangladesh.

# Research Questions and Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on gender, social exclusion and the dynamics of poverty in relation to the capability approach, and presented the theoretical framework for this research in the context of Bangladesh. This chapter explains the research questions and the methodological basis for this thesis. In doing so, the first section outlines the research questions used to identify the overall research aim, which is:

**To identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities vis-a-vis wider Bangladeshi society.**

By addressing the notion of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to gender and poverty in Bangladesh, this thesis challenges the conventional gender and poverty research in Bangladesh. I have argued in a previous chapter (see Chapter 3) that whilst the notion of social exclusion has dominated thinking in developed societies, it offers an integrated framework for analyzing the experience of deprivation in developing countries too. At the same time, I agree that the concepts of social exclusion and poverty are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. Therefore, this thesis highlights the structural and institutional barriers to individuals and the country's development, and offers an alternative policy paradigm to existing research for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. In this respect, the study formulated two specific research aims:

- To identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in patriarchal (Chakma community) and matrilineal (Garo community) society in Bangladesh

- To examine how social exclusion and inclusion influence indigenous women's personal, socio-cultural, economic and political life within their own communities and mainstream society in Bangladesh.

It could be argued that research in the social sciences focuses particularly on describing, understanding, and interpreting social phenomena and processes. It is

normally quite difficult to predict and explain social phenomena very precisely; therefore, social researchers depend on different methodological approaches as compared with natural scientists. The choice of methods should reflect both one's research topic and the overall research strategy, as one's methodology shapes which methods are selected and how each of these is used (Silverman, 2005). Indeed, different types of methodology are required for different investigations, but the logic of adopting certain methodological approaches depends on the nature and purpose of the study.

With this understanding, this chapter explains the data collection techniques and analytical framework selected for this research, and it argues why and how these methods were chosen for this thesis. Accordingly, this chapter outlines the research questions, study areas, and sampling method.

## 4.2 Research questions

After reviewing the existing literature, this research identified three main research questions and each is associated with subsidiary research questions. All these issues emerged from the literature cited in the previous two chapters (Chapter 2 & 3).

1. **What are the processes of social exclusion and inclusion for indigenous women within their own societies in Bangladesh?**

   - How do indigenous women experience social exclusion and inclusion within their own communities in terms of decision-making on, and control of, domestic issues like marriage, education, childcare, income and expenditure, and property inheritance?

2. **What are the processes of social exclusion and inclusion for indigenous women within mainstream society in Bangladesh?**

   - What opportunities and constraints do indigenous women experience in education, the labour market and political participation in Bangladesh?

   - To what extent do these opportunities and constraints affect their participation in mainstream society?

3. **What are the consequences of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women within their own communities and mainstream society in Bangladesh?**

- To what extent are indigenous women able to participate at different levels (socio-cultural, political and economic) within their own communities?

- To what extent are indigenous women able to participate at different levels (social-cultural, political and economic) in wider Bangladeshi society?

## 4.3 Philosophical framework

The philosophical understanding on which research is based provides the research's ontological and epistemological positions. Accordingly, methodology, methods and sources are closely connected to, and built upon, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of any research (Grix, 2004). With this understanding, this research has followed the following steps:

**Figure 4.1: Steps for the overall research process**
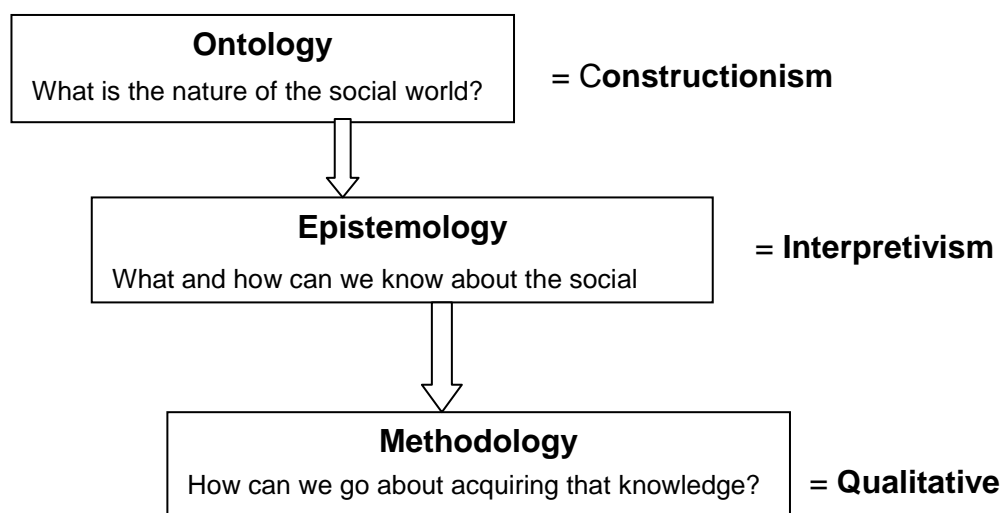


Source: Adapted from Grix (2004)

**Ontological considerations and constructionism**

The ontological position of this study relates to 'constructionism', which asserts that, 'Social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision' (Bryman,

2004, p.17). In relation to this, Blaikie (1993) argues that social reality is the product of processes by which social actors negotiate the meanings of and for actions and situations. Bryman (2004) states that constructionism is also frequently used as a term that reflects the indeterminacy of our knowledge of the social world, therefore the notion is also connected with the term 'social constructions'. In this perspective, Burr (1995) suggests that social constructionism has four components:

- it critiques taken-for-granted knowledge

- it links historical and cultural specificity

- knowledge and understanding are understood to be constructed thorough daily  interactions

- understanding is seen as forming different kinds of social action.

Schwandt (2000, p.194) states that, 'As social constructivists, many qualitative researchers posit that all types of knowledge are constructed within an individual's cognitive framework and theoretical concepts – therefore all understandings of the external world are not reflections of it, but are solely subjective interpretations'. From this perspective, all knowledge is predicated on the values, ideas and judgements of the individual, and is locally and contextually defined (Danermark et al., 2002). For this reason, constructivists generally agree with Max Weber that they need to employ interpretive understanding (*verstehen*) in order to analyse social action (Ruggie, 1998).

It can be argued that positivist methods are able to tackle 'what' and 'where' questions, which means they can capture states or conditions (Ellis, 2000). On the other hand, social-constructivist methods are generally able to shed light on 'why' and 'how' questions (Woodhouse, 1998), and are useful for capturing processes (Murray, 2002). For this reason, I chose a social constructionism method for this research rather than a positivist method, as the research explains the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in indigenous communities in Bangladesh. As Agarwal argues, 'The process of this social construction is inadequately understood, as is also how particular forms of gender inequalities are maintained, and by what means they might change over time' (Agarwal, 1997, p.2).

I also agree with Kanbur (2001) that social constructivist research has multi-dimensional value and covers the specific population where participants can take part actively in inductive research. The following diagram illustrates how the social constructionist framework is connected with the ontological position of this study and how it links with the core ideas of the research, such as gender, social exclusion and poverty.

**Figure 4.2: Identifying social exclusion and inclusion in terms of a social constructionist framework**

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Resources (pre-conditions)  │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │            Process            │
                    │   ➢ Personal                  │
                    │   ➢ Socio-cultural            │
                    │   ➢ Political                 │
                    │   ➢ Economic                  │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │           Outcomes            │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
              Negative                          Positive
            ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
            │ Poverty and social│        │ Social inclusion │
            │    exclusion      │        │   /well-being    │
            └──────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
```
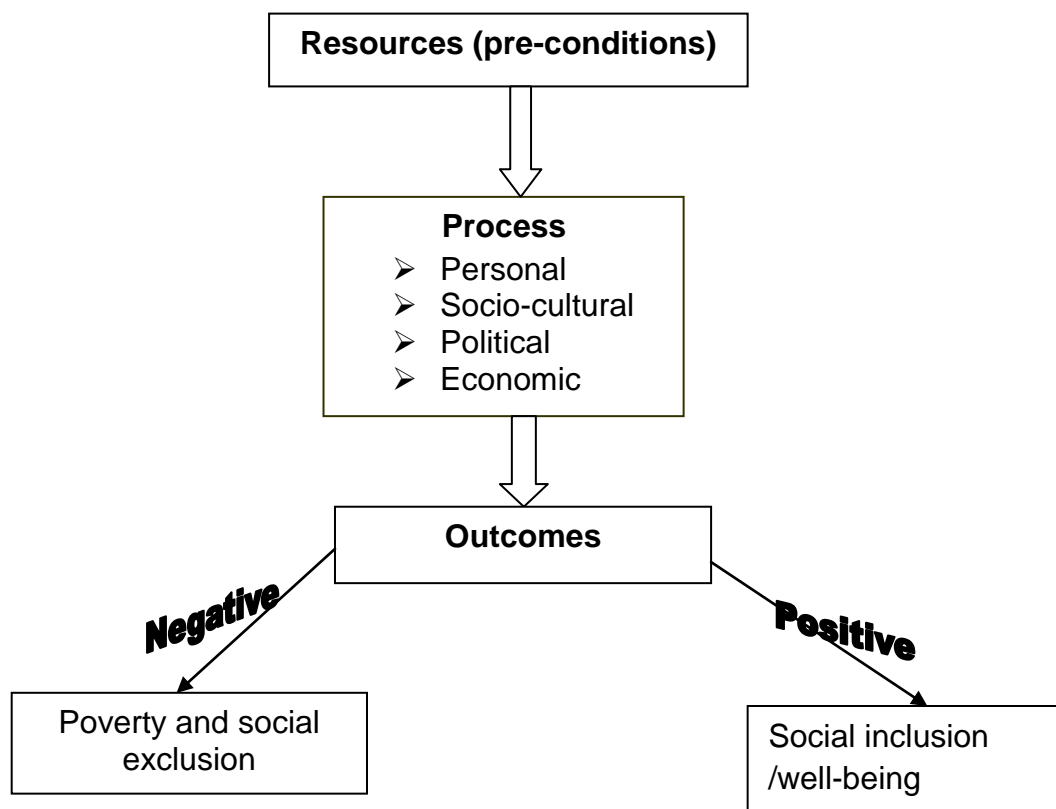
This figure illustrates that a person (resources) is observed as part of his/her total life situation, that is as a whole, with each part interrelated to all the other parts in a complex way through a process. Social constructionism explores this whole process and explains 'why' and 'how' this reality is constructed. Concomitantly, this study follows the 'social constructionist framework that explains how individual experience is located within society, history and cultural practices (pre-conditions) and is 'embedded' (included) within a set of relations that produce both the possibilities (processes) and the limitations of that experience (outcomes such as poverty)' (Acker et al. 1991, p.135).

**Epistemological position and interpretivism**

This research's philosophical perspective follows the epistemological position of the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes the belief that reality is socially constructed and the goal of social scientists is to understand what meanings people give to that reality. It also underlines the fact that there is not just one reality out there to be measured: objects and events are understood by different people differently, and those perceptions are the reality – realities – that social science should focus on (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p.35). From this point of view, Jennings states that a researcher working within this framework must be able to provide:

> *an empirically accurate description of the factual circumstances surrounding the action and an understanding of the norms and values operating in the cultural context to make the action 'appropriate'* (Jennings, 1983, p.14).

The aim of this research is to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion as they relate to indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh. In this respect, the study has been accomplished using the interpretivist paradigm which offers the following ideas:

- Reality does not lie outside the individual, but each person is subjectively involved in his/her experiences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In this study, indigenous women's subjective experiences highlight the process of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

- The aim is to understand how human beings make sense of their surroundings (ibid, 1979). As described in this thesis, the processes of social exclusion and inclusion affect indigenous women's personal, socio-cultural, political and economic life in Bangladesh, and that is what they associate with their surroundings.

- Research using the paradigm focuses on observing participant action (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, this research has observed indigenous women's functioning characteristics, as they highlight the women's position at the domestic and wider society levels in Bangladesh.

- Most importantly, interpretivism believes that it helps us to understand 'the social world' (Grix, 2004). Weber (1949) believes that the social world cannot

be described without investigating how individuals use language and symbols to construct what social practices and experiences mean for them. He also argues that the social world is highly structured (that it has certain objective features), whilst Hughes (1987) also argues that we need to understand how people subjectively interpret their social world rather than just understanding their sensory reception and apprehension of the external, material world. Weber calls the goal of interpretivist research '*verstehen*' or understanding.

Thus, the epistemological position of interpretivism posits that,

> *Knowledge is derived from everyday concepts and meanings (i.e., common sense terms and typical situations). The social researcher enters the everyday social world (e.g., through participation observation and ethnographic style fieldwork) in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings, and then reconstructs these meanings in a social scientific language* (Uddin and Hamiduzzaman, 2009, p.5).

At one level, these later accounts are regarded as re-descriptions of everyday accounts; at another, they are developed into theories (Hughes, 1987).

This philosophy rejects the positivist belief that there is a concrete, objective reality that scientific methods help us to understand (Lynch and Bogen, 1997). Instead, interpretivists believe that, 'Scientists construct an image of reality based on their preferences and prejudices and their interaction with others' (Schutt, 2004, p.75). Positivist philosophy believes that there is an objective reality that exists apart from the perceptions of those who observe it, and that the goal of science is to better understand this reality. From this standpoint, the positivist approach holds the consideration of values to be beyond the scope of science,

On the other hand, it could be argued that critical realism, as a form of post-positivism, could be used for this research rather than an interpretive standpoint. Followers of this philosophy believe that there is an external, objective reality, but they are very sensitive to the complexity of this reality and to the limitations and biases of the scientist who study it (Guba and Lincol, 1994, p.111). As a result, critical realism shares the foundationalist ontology with positivism in which they seek causal explanations for the social world and then move away from them to

interpretive understanding (Sayer, 2000). As I have argued, this research focuses on the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially women, in patriarchal and matrilineal communities in Bangladesh. It therefore highlights the structural and institutional barriers rather than any causal explanation for the situation of particular communities.

Agarwal (1997, p. 1-2) states that:

> *Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies, in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race. Neither uniform across societies nor historically static (as numerous studies of different cultures, regions and communities bear out), they may be seen as largely socially constructed (rather than biologically determined).*

Connell (1987) argues that gender relations are structured by the division of labour, power and emotional attachments, and also that they exist in every state institution where the organisation of the state regulates gender relations. Therefore, Agarwal (1997) argues that they are revealed not only in the division of labour and resources but also in the way different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, and behaviour patterns (outcomes) are assigned to men and women.

Thus, I would argue that indigenous women in Bangladesh have an inter-relationship with each other within the system, as a sub-system inter-relating with other sub-systems, and it is through the chain of these system interactions that they establish their status. They are constantly adapting their status in an interchange with many different aspects of the environment. These dynamics of interactions, transactions and organizational patterns, which are critical to the functioning both of the individual and their situation, are only observable when we study the system as a whole. In this study, Garo and Chakma women are considered as people who are pushed into forming an excluded society and then interact with the environment of the micro system, which will affect and create changes in the entire system. Therefore I believe that for this study interpretivism and constructionism are useful frameworks on the basis of their epistemological and ontological positions.

## 4.4 Qualitative research

In line with its ontological and epistemological position, this study was accomplished through qualitative research. It is therefore necessary to justify why qualitative methods were useful as the main data collection methods for the study. However, there is an extensive literature that argues the comparative advantages of qualitative and quantitative research (Silverman, 2006 and Bryman, 2004). Bryman (2004) argues that quantitative and qualitative research has different ontological and epistemological considerations, which constitute different research strategies for social investigation. He states that qualitative and quantitative research 'represents a useful means of classifying different methods of social science because it is a helpful umbrella for a range of issues concerned with the practice of social research'. (Bryman, 2004, p.19)

Bryman (2004) argues that quantitative research strategy is associated with an epistemological position of 'positivism' and an ontological position of 'objectivism'; on the other hand, qualitative research strategy is associated with an epistemological consideration of 'interpretivism' and an ontological concern with 'constructionism'. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.2),

> *Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.*

Similarly, Mason states:

> *Qualitative research is interpretive, which means that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced and produced. Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data. There is more emphasis on 'holistic' forms of analysis and explanation, in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations (*Mason, 1996, p.4).

In the context of the above ideas, it could be argued that quantitative research methods tend to be used in survey research with a positivistic framework, and they seek to reveal causal relationships. But this study has been carried out with an interpretivist stance, and emphasizes an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which a view of social reality is constructed by individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and practices/experiences in the particular social context (Bryman, 2004). In addition, I agree with Clisby et al. (2007, p.8) that 'qualitative research strategies facilitated the collection and analysis of personal beliefs and experiences, commonalities and women's own understandings of their lives'. Therefore, I believe that qualitative research has assisted me to establish an understanding of indigenous women's experience within their particular social settings in Bangladesh better than quantitative research would have.

## 4.5 Study area

This study was conducted in the greater Mymensingh district[6] where the majority of the Garo people lives in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Chakma community occupies the hilly areas in Bangladesh, so the study of this community concentrated on the Chittagong hilly areas[7] (see the map below). The main reasons for choosing this study area were:

- An increasing number of ethic people were reported to be in the study area.

- The area contains a large and ancient village where these people have lived for hundreds of years.

- It offered access to data and other sources of current information.

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[6] The Garo community has been living in Bangladesh for thousands of years. Garo people have lived mainly in the northern part of Bangladesh, in the districts of Mymensingh and Tangail

[7] The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is the largest region in terms of physical size and lies on the extreme southern border of Bangladesh The region now compromises three districts – the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bandarban and Khagrachari. It covers an approximate area of 5,089 sq miles. The CHT is predominantly a land of ethnic minorities – the Chakma, Marma, Tipperas, Chak, Murung, Khumi, Lushai, Bowm and Pankho – and was formerly a part of East Pakistan (during the era of Pakistan), becoming a part of Bangladesh after its liberation in 1971.

**Figure 4.3: Identifying the thesis study areas on a map of Bangladesh**



## 4.6 Sampling: size and methods of selection

To fulfil the research objectives, a total of 60 respondents (see Table 4.1) were interviewed for the main data collection, and these included 20 women from each community and also five government and non-government officials from each of the Garo and Chakma communities. In order to elicit male perceptions of gender relations within these marginalized patriarchal and matrilineal societies, I decided to conduct interviews with five selected men from each community.

**Table 4.1: Number of interviews conducted by Garo and Chakma communities**

|  | Garo Community | Chakma Community |
|---|---|---|
| Semi-structured interviews with indigenous women | 20 | 20 |
| Semi-structured interviews with indigenous men | 5 | 5 |
| Officials (Govt. and Non-govt.) | 5 | 5 |
| **Total** | **30** | **30** |

All research participants especially indigenous women were aged between 18 and 50 years old (see Table 5.1) and thus belonged to the largest age group, according to the 2001 Bangladesh census. The sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews was based on the purposive sampling method, and interviews targeted those respondents who had given me sufficient data to answer all my research questions.

Before conducting the pilot study, I had planned to use a snowball sampling method to select potential participants for this research. Schutt claims that, 'Snowball sampling is useful for hard-to-reach or hard-to-identify populations for which there is no sampling frame, but the members of which are somewhat interconnected (at least some members of the population know each other)' (Schutt, 2004, p.151). The problem with snowball sampling is that it cannot represent the total population in which the researcher is interested, so generalization must be tentative (Schutt, 2004). However, qualitative sampling can never represent a group in a statistical way. Another, similar problem with snowball sampling is that it may only produce interviews with a very small clique of people who are very similar to each other. However, Bryman (2004) argues that in a qualitative research framework it is more likely to be a reasonable guide and 'fit' than other statistical sampling.

Rubin and Rubin (1995, pp.65-92) state that, 'Researchers should try to select interviewees who are knowledgeable about the subject of the interview, who are open to talking, and who represent the range of perspectives'. In this regard, a purposive sampling method might have been useful for this research, since, 'It targets individuals who are particularly knowledgeable about the issues under

investigation' (Schutt, 2004, p.150). However, this study was to be based on indigenous people, especially women, who had a different socio-cultural status from me, and thus, as a researcher, I thought it might be difficult for me to decide whether to approach a person in a particular situation to achieve the research objectives.

Given these difficulties, as a first step, I decided to conduct a pilot study to evaluate and test the draft semi structured interview schedule and the overall sampling method for the final study. In doing so, my interest was in identifying those organizations or agencies, which could be considered to have a significant role within these communities.

## 4.7 The pilot study

In the first place, a letter (see Appendix 2) was sent to selected agencies and officials to arrange a meeting with the researcher to explain the aim of this research using the information pack, and to seek their help in reaching potential participants for the research. However, it was clearly stated that only the researcher would have the right to select potential participants for the research, though all participants would have the right to refuse to participate, and this would not affect any existing relationships or access to services from the agencies involved. Subsequently, all participants were given the right to withdraw from this study before the data for the research was processed.

I carried out one focus group discussion (FGD) with each community for the pilot study. For the first phase, I thought it would be difficult to arrange focus group discussions with suitable research participants, given the latter's geographical diversity, language barriers and childcare or domestic duties. Considering these field challenges, I contacted development workers and agencies who worked in Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh.  These contacts with local organizations enabled me, firstly, to develop a rapport with local indigenous people who would help me to identify potential participants for focus group discussions in each community. Secondly, the organizations shared with me their experiences of, and knowledge about, the Garo and Chakma communities, and informed me what support and services were available for them. The most important information I received from these organizations was that I would not need an interpreter to do my field work with these communities, which would be an advantage in giving me first hand practical

experience in my field work. Therefore, I was able to establish a good relationship with both indigenous communities, though sometimes people did see me as an 'outsider', a woman who was showing an 'unusual' interest in these men and women.

The first focus group discussion (FGD) was held in Haluaghat *thana*, which is considered the biggest concentration of Garo people in Bangladesh. After I had conducted the first FGD, I went to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) for my second FGD with Chakma women in the Rangamati district, where there is a particularly large, as well as ancient, village where Chkama people have lived for hundreds of years. The first focus group participant from the Chakma community was identified with the help of a local development organization named World Vision. In arranging a time and place for the focus group discussion, we considered the participants' preferences. Subsequently, each focus group discussion was recorded with the permission of the participants, though they did not agree to my taking any group pictures or videos. The following table (Table 4.1) highlights the general demographic profiles of the selected FGD participants in the pilot study.

**Table 4.2 Demographic profile of the FGD participants**

| FGD-1 | | | | FGD- 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Garo Community | | | | Chakma community | | | |
| **Name** | **Age** | **Marital Status** | **Occupation** | **Name** | **Age** | **Marital Status** | **Occupation** |
| Arpita | 40 | Single | Teacher | Anuradha | 28 | Married | Day labourer |
| Dipa | 28 | Married | *Selling home-grown produce | Bani | 48 | Married | Harvesting or cultivation |
| Joly | 43 | Widow | House tutor | Chaaya | 26 | Single | Handicrafts |
| Kakon | 36 | Married | Day labourer | Dristi | 30 | Married | Sewing |
| Eesha | 24 | Single | NGO worker | Ekta | 34 | Widow | Post-harvest activities or casual jobs |

\* All the names used are pseudonyms. Chakma women always keep 'Chakma' as their last name, while a Garo woman keeps the name of her clan as her last name.

* Ages were given by the respondents, though in most cases this was initially presumed and I needed to check their national ID cards. However, sometimes participants did not show National ID Cards because they did not have them.

* Some Garo/Chakma women defined themselves as a housewives, but I found they did a lot of seasonal (casual/informal) work such as sewing, making mats, making handicraft items, gathering vegetables from the hills and then selling them in the local market, harvesting, raising poultry, husking and drying paddy or crops, etc.

### 4.7.1 Focus-group discussion

Focus group discussion (FGD) was the main method for the pilot study. Five indigenous women were selected for each focus group, and there was one group from each community. It could be said that the most difficult task for me was to arrange for five interviewees (indigenous women) to be together at the same time in one place that was convenient for all of them. My first focus group participant was recruited with the help of one of my contacts in the local development agencies. This first FGD participant was Arpita (not her real name) from the Garo community, who was a primary school teacher in Haluaghat. She helped me by introducing other FGD respondents, in accordance with the snowball sampling method. Then, we arranged a private and comfortable place for all participants in the group from the Garo community. I could say that Arpita acted as a gate-keeper for this research, as she arranged the access to other people with whom I could conduct interviews.

In choosing an FGD for the pilot study, I agreed with Tonkiss (2004) who states that, 'Focus groups provide a tool of research design, refining and clarifying the concepts and language used within a study, or helping to formulate a qualitative interview schedule: defining terms, raising themes for inclusion in a topic guide, clarifying the wording or order of questions, or assessing participants' understanding of the key concepts and language' (2004, p.196). For this reason, I organized focus group discussions to identify research questions, clarify core themes and ideas that might be useful to explore the participant's responses, and obtain any alternative suggestions or issues that might be relevant for the interview schedule.

The duration of each group discussion was two and a half to three hours. All participants were clearly informed that their participation or refusal to participate would not affect any existing relationships or access to services that they might receive from local agencies. The focus group discussions were at a general level

and covered the following points:

- background of the participants

- the significance of  their people's history

- social issues and economic issues and practices

- gender relationships

- concepts of poverty and social exclusion

- function of service providers.

After conducting the FGDs, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews for further data collection, as this would create a private atmosphere in which to discuss the women's personal and domestic problems. In order to choose the potential participants for the final study, I considered purposive sampling. I agreed with Seale (2004) that, 'This rationale for selection can be seen as a form of theoretical sampling, where participants are selected with the aim of developing conceptual insights in relation to the topic'.

### 4.7.2 Issues arising from the pilot study

After conducting the FGDs, I was confronted with the following issues in relation to the research.

**Sampling frame and process**

My first concern was to select the specific geographical area on which the final study would focus. In doing so, I identified six northern *thanas* (*upazilas or sub-district*) of the former greater Mymensingh district in Bangladesh where the majority of the Garo people live. These were: Haluaghat and Dhobaura (Mymensingh district), Durgapur and Kalmakanda (Netrokona district) and Nakla and Nlitabari (Serpur district). From these six *thanas*, I chose Haluagghat *upazila*, which consists of 356.07 square kilometers, for my fieldwork.  Haluagghat *upazila* consists of 12 union *parishads*  and 205 villages. I made this selection in order to have good access and also geographical diversity, since this area is home to both plains Garo people and hill Garo people. The FGD participants also confirmed that the largest numbers of Garo

people lived in northern Mymensingh, which includes the districts of Sherpur and Netrokona (see map in Appendix 1).

On the other hand, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is situated in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh bordering with India and Myanmar, and against the backdrop of the Bay of Bengal. The CHT cover about 10 per cent of the 144,000 sq km land area of Bangladesh. The CHT have been administered as three administrative hill districts – Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari – since the early eighties of the last century. The majority of the Chakma people live in the Rangamati district, and I therefore chose this district for the final version of my study of the Chakma community in Bangladesh.

Rangamati district is bounded by the Tripura State of India in the north, the Bandarban district on the south, the Mizoram State of India and the Chin State of Myanmar on the east, and the Khagrachhari and Chittagong districts on the west (see map in Appendix 1). According to the Bangladesh Population Census report (2001) Rangamati district consists of 10 *upazilas (sub-district)* (50 union *parishads* and 1347 villages), and one municipality with an area of 6,116.13 sq km. The total population is 507,180 (men make up 53.59 per cent, women 46.41per cent). Rangamati district is populated with a variety of indigenous groups, such as the Chakma, Bome, Chak, Khumi, Kheyang, Lusai, Mo, Murang, Panku, Santal, and Manipuri. Therefore, it would be easier for me to observe the cultural diversity and the target tribe's social integration with other indigenous communities and with mainstream society as well.

Subsequently, I decided to use a semi-structured interview schedule with a purposive sampling method for my main data collection. I made this choice because, after conducting the FGDs, I realized that indigenous women were not comfortable discussing their personal issues and views in front of other participants. Therefore, indigenous women sometimes merged their views with those of other participants to produce a general view. I also observed that the snowball sampling method tended to select those women who shared similar experiences and knowledge about this research topic. In addition, the snowball sampling method was based on one participant nominating the next participant for data collection; therefore indigenous women were reluctant to share their views in case one participant identified the other

participants. For this reason, I decided to use purposive sampling for the semi-structured interviews.

**Group identification**

The second issue raised by the pilot study was that of group identification, or what I should call Chakma and Garo people in this study. The Chakma people wanted to be called indigenous people, whereas the Garo people preferred me to call them *mandi* (meaning human beings) or indigenous people. For this reason, I was confronted with an identity dilemma which could be developed as a topic of controversy for this research. According to the focus group participants from both communities, they were called different names, such as indigenous people, tribal people, *Adivasis*, *Upojatis*, *Paharis*, minority people, *Jhummas* and so on by mainstream people. In this situation, I decided to call them indigenous people, in order to respect their self identification as indigenous people even though they were not recognised as such by the Government of Bangladesh. Following my application of an ethical review of the research, I referred to these community people as 'tribal people'; but after conducting the pilot study I re-defined their group identity as indigenous people. This enabled me to establish a good rapport with all the research participants. Outsiders often identify these people differently from the way in which they identify themselves, because they don't understand their community knowledge and practices. So, I picked this issue as the subject of further interviews, so as to understand the problem of different identities in the Chakma and Garo communities.

**Language**

The most important finding that came out of the pilot study was that both Chakma and Garo people could speak fluent Bengali, which would give me the opportunity to communicate privately with the research participants. After conducting the pilot study, I noticed that both Chakma and Garo people usually spoke their community language in the domestic sphere and when communicating with other people in their community; but when they interacted with Bengali people or were out of their own community, they usually communicated in the Bangla language.

The name of the Garo peoples' community is *Achik Kushik*. According to FGD participants, Bengali people (mainstream people) do not understand Achik, but Garo

people can easily understand Bengali, as they have to take their primary education in the Bangla language.

Similarly, Chakma FGD participants informed me that they could communicate fluently in the Bengali language, as they were used to learning the Bengali language at the local primary school and from local Bengali people. It is necessary to mention, however, that the Chakma people have their own alphabet or letters, and the *Chakma Pattham Path* is now being introduced as a compulsory textbook for Chakma and Tanchangya pupils in primary school. The Chakma language belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the greater Indo-European language family. Of all the tribes living in the Hill Tracts of Chittagong, only the people of Chakama and Tanchangya tribes have the same language.

### 4.7.3 The way forward

One of the most important points suggested by the pilot study was that a semi-structured interview schedule with a purposive sampling method should be used as the main data collection technique.  Apart from this, the pilot study enabled me to develop a good rapport with local development agencies, along with potential respondents for this study. In addition, I developed a semi-structured interview schedule with the object of obtaining better qualitative data.  It was also after conducting the pilot study that I finalized my research areas, sampling method for semi-structured interviews and sample size, and, most importantly, that I dismissed the idea of an interpreter for this study. All the fieldwork documents such as the letter of introduction, consent form, information sheet and semi-structured interview schedule are to be found in the Appendix 2.

## 4.8 Data collection: qualitative methods

It could be argued that qualitative study basically involves an inductive process that directly observes experiences and can be immediately recognized (Schutt, 2004). Schutt (2004, p.50) states that exploratory research 'begins by observing social interaction and interviewing social actors in depth and then developing an explanation for what has been found'.  Therefore, in order to investigate indigenous women's position in a patriarchal and a matrilineal social context in Bangladesh, it was necessary to explore women's explanations to account for the qualitative data.

However, the processes of social exclusion and inclusion were studied in relation to the personal, socio-cultural, political, educational and economic levels of the participants' especially women participants' lives.

Thus, I agree with Schutt (2004) that explanations developed inductively from qualitative research can feel authentic because they directly deal with participants' own views. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p.5) have argued that, 'Qualitative interviewing methods are suitable for obtaining specific information from women interviewees, but issues such as objectives and how knowledge is measured also need to be considered'. Subsequently, qualitative research has been found to have a greater affinity with feminist viewpoints, because it can also provide an opportunity to represent a feminist sensitivity (Bryman, 2004, p. 287).

In this context, I used different types of data collection techniques to collect the main data for this study. These will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

## 4.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

Following the pilot study, I decided to use a semi-structured interview schedule with purposive sampling (with indigenous women, indigenous men and officials) for the main data collection (see the interview schedule in the Appendix 2). The semi-structured or in-depth interview was identified as the main method for this qualitative research.  Grix (2004) argues that, 'It allows a certain degree of flexibility for the pursuit of unexpected lines of enquiry during the interview' (Grix, 2004, p.127). In addition, it helped me to establish a free atmosphere in which to put my initial questions to research participants and also to encourage the interviewees to talk freely when answering the follow-up questions. I agree with Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003, p.141) that, 'The in-depth format also permits the researcher to explore fully all the factors that underpin participants' answers: reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs', which helps to develop explanatory evidence for qualitative research. Moreover, the semi-structured interview assisted in building cooperation between researcher and interviewee during the sharing of ideas, experiences, and perceptions. In this study, this data collection method helped to explore the perceptions, understanding and knowledge of the indigenous people, especially women, in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. It provided the

privacy in which these interviewees could discuss any personal or private issues during the interview session.

Similarly, I agree with Holstein and Gubrium (1997) that the researcher is not simply a 'pipeline', through which knowledge is transmitted. Researchers have to consider the knowledge brought out in the interview through collaboration between interviewee and researcher. This meant it was necessary to establish a good rapport between me, as the researcher, and all the research participants by showing an interest in, and respecting, the individual participants.

In this regard, during the first few minutes after meeting with research participants, I needed to avoid research questions and begin by making general conversation to establish a good working relationship with individual participants. This helped me to create an easy and comfortable environment to carry out the interview. Thus, at the beginning of the interview, I asked participants for background information like whether they had enough time to talk with me, whom they lived with, whether they needed to leave at any point, and whether they had any young children who needed their (female participants') help, and I pointed out that they could interrupt me at any time, and so on.

### 4.8.2 Observations

Observation is a selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as its takes place. This has been described as follows:

> *Observation is a very effective way of finding out what people do in particular contexts, the routines and interactional patterns of their everyday lives* (Darlington and Scott, 2002, p.74).

This study is based on indigenous people, especially women, who live in different socio-cultural settings from those of mainstream society in Bangladesh. Therefore, observation methods were employed for the pilot study and for interviewing as well. The purpose of observation was to witness what was going on in particular indigenous communities and to see how these people interacted within their own communities and within wider Bangladeshi society.  Thus, being a researcher, I took field notes in my research diaries covering every individual's interviews. Notes were included on how participants shared their experiences during interview, visual

materials (like group pictures of community activities), dress style, cultural practices, service provider activities, and so on. This was the result of my belief that the observation method was also a suitable research technique for this project.

### 4.8.3 Recording

Recording of data was done through the interview schedule and a field notebook, but the interview schedule was the main tool for recording all the discussion between the interviewee and interviewer. It was expected that the process of recording would enable the researcher to gather the sort of extra information which often gets omitted in unfocused note-taking.

The field notebook was used to note the social activities of the respondents and their family members, for example where they shopped and worked, whom they visited and any type of special activities that would give meaningful insights for the study. However, it is necessary to point out that the use of audio recording depended on the permission of the interviewees and mutual understanding between the interviewer and interviewees. I managed to record one FGD from the Garo community for the pilot study, and then 15 interviews from Garo women and 10 interviews from Chakma women for the main data. Some participants from both communities were not comfortable with their interviews being recorded because they felt uncomfortable about sharing their personal and community problems in front any recording system.

## 4.9 Ethical issues

All social research involves with some ethical issues. This research was also bound by some ethical consideration throughout its duration. Of this issue, Blaxter et al. 1996, p.148) state:

> *A researcher has a set of moral principles that guide her in the choice of how to conduct herself with regard to such topics as confidentiality, anonymity, legality, professionalism and privacy when dealing with people in the research.*

Bearing this in mind, I submitted an application for an ethical review to the ethical research panel so that they might give me approval for the entire project. Since this research involved indigenous people, especially women, who are considered to be

amongst the most vulnerable groups in Bangladeshi society, ethical consideration was given to protecting their right to participation only with informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and to have the purposes of the study explained before information was collected, bearing in mind data protection, risk and harm issues. The following ethical guidelines were established for this study.

**Introducing and explaining the purpose of the study**

Faden and Beauchamp (1986) state that:

> *Research participants can make an informed decision only if they have substantial understanding and adequate apprehension of all information that, in their view, is material or important to their decision to grant consent* (Faden and Beauchamp, 1986, p.306).

It could be said that every researcher first needs to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the study before collecting any information from the participants. For this reason, I explained the purpose, method, demands risks, inconveniences, discomforts and possible outcomes of the research, including whether and how the results might be disseminated to the participants.

**Informed consent**

Informed consent implies two related activities: participants need first to comprehend, and second, to agree voluntarily to, the nature of the research they are involved in and their role within it (Israel and Hay, 2006, p.61). Thus, I was ethically obliged to inform participants of all aspects of the research that might reasonably have influenced their willingness to participate. Informed consent forms were filled in by the interviewees before their participation. Respondents who were unable to provide written consent in the form of a signature were offered the opportunity to get a third party to indicate their willingness by signing on behalf of them and/or to put their thumb-mark (one of the official ways of authenticating a person's consent in Bangladesh) on the consent form. In addition, an information sheet (in Bengali, see the Appendix 2) was provided to every participant. I was endeavouring to protect their rights, since they were considered one of the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh.

**Avoiding harm and doing good**

Every field research study should consider carefully before beginning a project how to avoid harming its subjects. It is not possible to avoid every theoretical possibility of harm, nor to be sure that any project will have no adverse consequences whatsoever to any individuals. Schutt (2004) argues that direct harm to the reputations or feelings of particular individuals must be carefully avoided by maintaining the confidentiality of the research subjects and also avoiding adversely affecting the course of events while engaged in a setting. However, 'In social science research is generally more likely to involve psychological distress, discomfort, social disadvantage and invasion of privacy or infringement of rights than physical injury' (Israel and Hay, 2006, p.96). In view of this, to prevent others learning about the topic of the interview and considering the safety of the women participants, I did not inform any household or community members other than the women participants that the interview schedule included some questions on violence, and I did not do any research on violence with men in the same communities in which women had been interviewed. Consequently, my actions as a researcher did not entail any significant risk, loss or damage to the interviewees, or costs or burdens for the researcher.

I believe that this research was able to highlight the processes of exclusion and inclusion of indigenous peoples, especially women, in Bangladesh. In addition, interviews with policy makers and development workers were likely to stimulate further attention to improvements in the poverty reduction strategies for all indigenous communities in Bangladesh. It also supported the idea that a reciprocal benefit should accrue to the interviewees for allowing the researcher's often intimate access to their personal and community knowledge. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000: principle 9).

**Freedom from coercion to participate**

All participants were selected according to their willingness to participate in this study, and in this way, I ensured their freedom from coercion to participate. Participants had the right to decline to participate in this study or to discontinue participation at any time during the study without adverse consequences.

**Confidentiality**

Fitzgerald and Hamilton (1997, p.1102) state that, 'Where there can be no trust between informant and researcher, there are few guarantees as to the validity and worth of the information in an atmosphere where confidence is not respected'.

The respondents were clearly informed that the information they provided during the interview sessions would be kept strictly confidential. Only I would have access to the interview schedule, and this interview schedule would be destroyed after completion of the PhD degree. The name and address of the respondents would not be recorded anywhere in the study report.

**Privacy**

Privacy during group discussions and also in interview sessions was safeguarded by not disclosing any information to anyone and always using pseudonyms for research participants. All the interviews were held under conditions in which the respondents were comfortable with responding. Also, their identity was not linked to the study at any point or during any stages of the study. All documents, checklists, cameras and other research instruments were used under restrictions. In addition, it was ensured that the study findings would be used in advocacy, policymaking, and intervention activities.

## 4.10 Reflections on experiences in fieldwork

Every research study must include a lot of field-work experience and this is likely to have a major influence on research outcomes. The present research was conducted with two marginalized groups who had their own socio-cultural, economic and political life that influenced their experiences, ideas and practices. In relation to this, my fieldwork period incorporated several pleasant and unpleasant experiences. As Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980) state, fieldwork is characterized by feelings of self-doubt, uncertainty and frustration, and the researcher can only take comfort in the fact that he or she will feel more comfortable in the setting as the study progresses. Therefore it is necessary to mention some of the experience that I had gained from my field work.

Firstly, I would like to mention that I am a Muslim Bengali woman and my residential address belong to the capital city, Dhaka, in Bangladesh, so that my identity had

become intertwined with that of the mainstream community. For this reason, in the first instance, there was a feeling of anxiety as to how to engage with the indigenous people who were the subject of this research. However, my previous professional research activities as a researcher on a multi-sectoral programme on violence against women helped me to gain successful access to these communities. Apart from this, I felt that being a woman researcher interviewing indigenous women helped me to establish a good rapport with my female research participants easily and swiftly; although I interviewed both men and women for this research, and first and foremost I introduce myself to all my participants as a researcher who was conducting this study for the purpose of a higher academic degree. This identification helped me to reach a relationship of mutual confidence with all participants and to receive more informative responses for this study.

As I have mentioned, there are 45 indigenous communities in Bangladesh, and from them I chose just two -- one patriarchal (Chakma) and one matrilineal (Garo). A longer-term study with a larger sample, covering more areas, would have helped me to obtain a better overall picture of indigenous communities in Bangladesh. During the research, I was aware that time constraints and lack of funding might mean that insufficient information was obtained. A great deal of sensitive information is required for the successful completion of this type of research work.

During my fieldwork, I lived in areas where most people belonged to the local indigenous group and usually spoke in their own native language when they communicated with their own community members. However, they could also communicate in the Bengali language. I realized that the Garo women welcomed me very openly into their community, in comparison to the Chakma women. In some cases, some indigenous women would not co-operate with me. Some of them reacted very angrily, as in their words, 'A lot of people come here and note everything down about our lives, but no improvements happen'. They said that they were tired of this sort of thing and did not want to waste their valuable time on any more talking. In such situations, it was not possible for me to conduct an interview and I was compelled to withdraw.

In this study, the participants lived in a distant place i.e. the countryside of Bangladesh (see Figure 4.3), and as a researcher I needed stay with them for logistical reasons. In order to maximize the potential data from these research

participants, I decided to conduct both groups' interviews together. Therefore, in the first instance, I stayed in the Garo community for a week, and then I moved on to the Chakma community for the next week, returning again to the Garo community and then to the Chakma community to conduct further interviews. This meant I had a chance meet my research respondents every other week during my fieldwork period, i.e. over four months, although in some cases, flexibility was needed in order to meet with the potential interviewees. This interview process not only gave me an opportunity to collect more information about my subjects' personal, domestic and outside life experiences but also helped me to obtain and develop new themes and ideas during our communication.

I noticed that indigenous people, especially women, tended to hide their personal and community problems, for example those relating to their domestic situation, domestic violence, and so on. As a result of this, I realized, some participants had a tendency to generalize rather than give an obviously personal opinion, especially in group discussion.

From my present standpoint, I can say that complete reflection on the fieldwork has helped me to avoid possible biases in information caused by issues that were not reflected on during the analytical phase. It can be argued that for this research it would have been logical to consider feminist methodology and/or ethnography, given the nature of gendered analysis of poverty and social exclusion/inclusion of indigenous communities, especially indigenous women, in Bangladesh.

To consider this possibility, we need to discuss feminist methodology. Feminist research begins with the experiences of women, recognizes the researcher as a part of the research process, and acknowledges that the beliefs of the researcher shape the research process (Harding, 1987, p.9). Feminist research is research on and with women, and it places them centre stage. It involves direct contact with women and information is gathered directly from them (Kelly, Burton & Regan, 1994, p.32). It is defined as a focus on women, carried out by women for other women (Stanley & Wise, 1990, p.21; Webb, 1993, p.422). However, feminist research is based on the assumption that the world is socially constructed, it displays a relative aversion to empirical positivistic methodology, and it rejects the value-free nature of research (Punch, 2000). These principles mean that this research can be considered as feminist research to a certain extent; but there are certain aspects of feminist

methodology that do not fit with the philosophy of this research. These aspects are listed below.

- Feminist research rejects the 'male paradigm' and accepts the notion of the 'female prism' (Cook and Fonow, 1986), and this explanation of feminist research limits the extent to which men are brought into the research. The present research not only highlights indigenous women's lives and activities but also deals with indigenous men's perceptions in a matrilineal (Garo) and patriarchal (Chakma) social setting in Bangladesh. This means, it understands women from their own perspective, but also takes account of the views of other participants (indigenous men and development workers).

- It was beyond this research to establish a high level of rapport and reciprocity between interviewer and interviewee, which is the main point of the feminist research perspective. My own ethnic racial identity limited the possibility of a non-hierarchical relationship with the participants, [Not sure what this means, but I think you've made your point already], even though, as a researcher, I followed ethical guidelines and was very careful about my role and responsibilities at all stages of the research process.

- In feminist research, researcher and participant share a common location in the social world on the basis of their gender and can communicate on the basis of this similarity, although the researcher's race, ethnicity, gender, class and cultural background play an important role in the investigation (Edwards, 1990). This principle is neither clear-cut nor fully accepted for this study. It is mentioned that the participants in the study were indigenous people, who had different ethnicities, religions, class status and cultural backgrounds from the researcher (me). However, my gender identity (as a woman) helped me to collect sensitive information (for example, about marriage, dowry, domestic violence etc.) from indigenous women in Bangladesh.

- Finally, due to the key fact that ethnographic research relies on observation and is closely linked to culture, it often takes a longer period of time to achieve the potential qualitative results.  At the same time, the covert role of ethnography does not provide participants with the opportunity for 'informed

consent' and 'privacy', which were considered the principal ethical issues for this research.

From the above discussion, I would like to argue that research undertaken into gender issues should not necessarily be called feminist research, as different qualitative approaches like semi-structured interviews and observation would be included within the feminist perspective in qualitative research. So, this research did not follow the full participatory model of conventional feminist research; but there were certain gender issues which intertwined with the assumptions of the feminist perspective.

## 4.11 Analytical strategy

Data analysis was done through the qualitative approaches that are presented by thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning. In this study, the phases of thematic analysis involved were: familiarization with data by transcription of verbal data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that qualitative interpretations are constructed. Thus the researcher first creates a field text consisting of field notes and documents from the fieldwork by 'indexing' (Sanjek, 1990, p.36) and 'filework' (Plath, 1990, p.374). Furthermore, this study integrates an interpretivist stance with an epistemological consideration of 'interpretivism' and ontological concerns with 'constuctionism', and it emphasizes an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research in which a view of social reality is constructed by individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and practices/experiences in the particular social context (Bryman, 2004). Thus I deemed that thematic analysis was a suitable method to explore tribal women's perceptions, explanations and life experiences in particular social settings in Bangladesh.

Thematic analysis is a search for the themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997). This process involves the following stages (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4:  The stages of the analytical process**
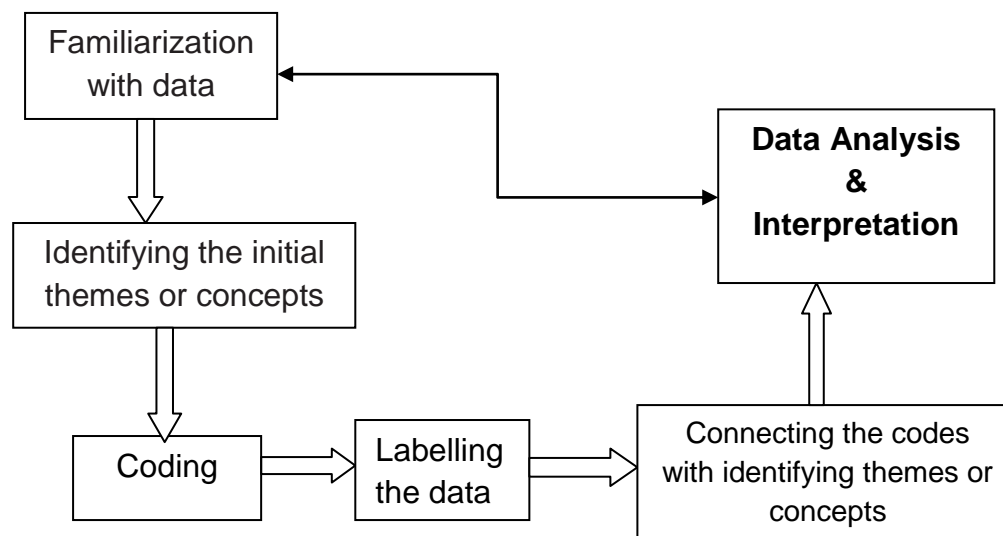


At the same time, I used some narratives or statements from the research participants that explicitly addressed true situations in a particular context. Subsequently, this direct speech provided the clarity to define the theme identified for this research.

### 4.11.1 Analyzing methods

***Familiarization***

In the first stage, data were transcribed, and then reviewed as a whole with the object of seeking recurrent themes or concepts for the study. On this topic, Spencer et al. (2003, p. 221) state:

> *It is not necessary to include the entire data set in the familiarization process, nor would time or resources usually permit, so the researcher needs to make a careful selection of data to be reviewed. In doing this, it is generally wise to review the proposal on which the research is based; with particular attention to the stated objectives of the research…the familiarization process should continue until it is felt that the diversity of circumstances and characteristics within the data set has been understood.*

With this understanding, I examined the entire research process in terms of what was significant and important for this study and how individual subjects expressed their understandings, experiences, and attitudes.

### *Identifying the initial themes or concepts*

The first task, according to the thematic framework, was to identify initial ideas and concepts from the data. Initial themes emerged during the analysis of the pilot interviews, and were modified as more interviews were analyzed. As I have already stated, this study is based on an interpretivist framework with its epistemological position: in this case, the actions, objects and events that were interpreted in the statements and experiences of the participants. However, Spencer, Ritche and O'Connor (2003, p. 222) argue, 'This structure is not necessarily permanent and can be changed at a later time. Its function at this early stage is to ensure that there is conceptual clarity within the framework and that no obvious areas of overlap or omission exist at the level of conception used'.

It is important to note that the summery of each focus group discussion provided me with an opportunity to develop the initial concepts or themes and also helped me to outline the key points identified by the research participants in response to the research aims.

### *Coding*

Coding is the most important step towards data analysis. Qualitative data do not emerge only from interviews but also from field notes of observations, visual images, historical documents, published texts, and transcripts of conversation (Seale, 2004). Therefore, the initial coding process helps us to summarize or reduce the data by pulling together themes and identifying labels. For this reason, 'It may be appropriate to understand coding as being also a type of indexing, whereby the analyst is marking sections of text according to whether they look like contributing to emerging themes' (Seale, 2004, p.313). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.27) state that, 'Coding can be thought about as a way of relating our data to our ideas about these data'. Therefore, the initial code for this study was developed from the raw information which was provided by the participants in semi-structured interviews. This process involved reading, listening to and summarizing the raw data.

### *Labelling the data*

After the coding process, I applied the identified themes or codes within a particular section of the interviews. This process involved reading each transcript in detail in

order to determine which part or parts were relevant for a particular code or codes. At this stage, the previous stages were closely scrutinized to ensure that the clustered themes were representative of the initial data analysis and assigned codes. There were several sections where more than one code had been used to label an appropriate category. The following table 4.3 highlights the identified emerging themes and sub-themes, along with particular labels for this research.

**Table 4.3:  Identifying social exclusion in relation to emerging themes and sub-themes from empirical data analysis**

| Dimension of Social exclusion | Drivers of Social Exclusion | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | **Major theme** | **Sub theme** |
| **Personal & Social** | **Marriage** | Marriage registration process |
| | | Exogamy/endogamy |
| | | Divorce and polygamy |
| | | Widowhood |
| | | Dowry / bride price |
| | | Domestic violence |
| | **Life style** | Food and drink |
| | | Dress style |
| | | Dance |
| | **Education** | |
| | **Heath** | |
| | **Identity** | Collective identity |
| | | Individual identity |
| **Political** | **Decision-making roles and participation** | Domestic decisions |
| | | Public decisions |
| | **Structural arrangements** | |
| **Economic** | **Employment and economic opportunities** | The nature of work |
| | | The labour market |
| | **Land inheritance rights** | Current laws relating to land |
| | | Constraints of land ownership |

***Connecting the codes with themes or concepts identified***

At this stage, I was engaged in linking the concepts or themes identified by the participants with the codes I had determined on. Similarities and differences between different groups of data were emerging at this stage, indicating areas of consensus in response to the research questions and areas of potential conflict. Thus, I could examine whether there was any consensus of views on a particular situation or issue within a community or not. Mason (1996) states at this stage there is a need to be clear about what kinds of phenomena the categories are supposed to represent.

***Data analysis and interpretation***

This stage involved going backwards and forwards between the data and emerging explanations until the explanation clearly fitted with the theoretical underpinning. It has been argued that, 'At an analytic level, explanation may be based on the explicit reasons that are inferred by participants themselves, or alternatively implicit reasons that are inferred by the analyst' (Spencer, Ritche and O'Connor, 2003, p.253). At this stage data were covered by a broad theme which was associated with different categories. These themes directly represented my main research objectives for this study. In this context, Spencer, Ritche, and O'Connor (2003) have stated that the following three requirements should be kept in mind when an analyst reaches the final stage of analysis:

- Firstly, phrases or expressions should be retained as much as possible from the participants' own language.

- Secondly, interpretation should be kept to a minimum, so that there is always an opportunity to revisit the original 'expressions' when the more refined levels are reached.

- Finally, once the data is synthesized, it should have coherence in terms of the content displayed such that its essence can be understood without recourse to seeing the original material (ibid, 2003, p.233).

## 4.12 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research questions and the philosophical framework for this thesis. In addition, it has explained the data collection methods and analytical

strategy, and also the ethical concerns of the research. In doing this, I have argued why qualitative methods were used for the main data collection.

The chapter highlights the fact that this study was based on a constructivist paradigm that assumes there are no absolute realities and the real world demonstrates material differences in terms of race, class and gender, and also a subjectivist epistemology which asserts that knowledge is derived from everyday concepts and meanings. It is also based on the idea that there is no one reality out there to be measured: objects and events are understood differently by different people. Therefore, this research focused on identifying processes of social exclusion and inclusion with regard to the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of the lives of indigenous people, particularly the women of the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities, in Bangladesh.

Following the pilot study, the original research design was modified. For example, I decided to use a semi-structured interview schedule with purposive sampling for the main data collection process. I believe it created a free atmosphere in which the researcher and respondents could discuss the research topic during the interview sessions. However, I also used other research techniques, such as focus group discussion, observation and recording, for data collection. The field notebook was used to record physical structures and observations of the general appearance of the respondents. It was mainly used to record the informants' responses and attitudes when they described their experiences. In addition, sometimes I used an audio recorder to record an interview and also took pictures with the permission of the interviewees, which was considered the most credible part of this research. Therefore, it could be argued that the recording of interviews using a tape recorder, a semi-structured interview schedule, and a field note book, and capturing visual images, ensured the validity and reliability of this study.

This chapter also gives the total size of the sample for this research, which were 60 (see Table 4.1). Furthermore, the inductive nature of this study was developed with observations of, or empirical findings on, indigenous women's and other research participant's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and practices/experiences in particular social contexts in Bangladesh. In doing so, a number of relevant ethical issues were highlighted, and these were considered throughout the research process.

Finally, data analysis through a thematic framework explains how the data was processed for the analysis in this thesis. In this respect, four data analysis chapters were developed for this thesis, which present the main research findings and discussion, in combination with the relevant theoretical knowledge.

# The role of marriage and socio-cultural life in the processes of social exclusion and inclusion: empirical evidence from indigenous women in Bangladesh

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents analyses of the experiences of the indigenous people of the Chakma and Garo communities, especially the women of these communities, in relation both to the personal and socio-cultural beliefs and practices of their own communities and to those of mainstream Bangladeshi society. This was one of the main research questions that I used to investigate the processes of social exclusion and inclusion both within the two communities and between them and wider Bangladeshi society. I wanted to find out whether there were any particular features of these people's personal and socio-cultural beliefs and practices that contributed to the exclusion of women's influence at a domestic and community level. It is from this perspective that this part of the research investigates individuals' social exclusion and inclusion in intra-household relationships within these marginalized patriarchal (Chakma community) and matrilineal (Garo community) societies. At the same time, this investigation of indigenous women's formal and informal socio-cultural practices within their communities will look at whether there are any internal (domestic/community) or external (wider society) obstacles that may influence their marginalized position. Thus, this investigation may draw attention to the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous communities, especially the women of these communities, from mainstream society. For these reasons, this chapter looks at the cultural and social barriers that may isolate indigenous women, using empirical evidence from their personal life experiences at both a community and a wider societal level.

In line with the work of with Kabeer (2005) and Silver (2007) (See Chapter 3), this research considers the multidimensional nature of social exclusion and inclusion for the indigenous people, especially the women, of the Chakma and Garo communities. I believe that putting an emphasis on these women's personal and socio-cultural life is useful for analysing their political and economic deprivation. In addition, it will explain how the rights of indigenous women are violated in various ways that ensure they experience both situational and structural poverty.

This research is based on a total of 50 interviews, 40 with indigenous women (20 from each community) and 10 with male members of these communities (five from each community). To produce these interviews, in the first phase, two focus group discussions (with five indigenous women from one community in each group) were conducted as a pilot study, to test the final semi-structured interview schedule for the research. Subsequently, I went to some local NGOs and government offices to collect formal policy documents relating to community development among these people. These helped me to develop my knowledge about the two communities. As concerns the theoretical understanding of this research, the epistemological position allows an interpretive framework (see Chapter 4), which means that indigenous people's interpretation of their personal and socio-cultural life will demonstrate the individual and structural barriers to personal and community well-being.

In order to analyze the personal (marriage) and cultural (livelihood) aspects of social exclusion and inclusion among Garo and Chakma women in Bangladesh, we first need to know about the general demographic background of the research participants from both communities. The demographic background will help us to appreciate the nature of qualitative data and elicit information about how the subjects' relationships and experiences correspond to various attitudes and behaviours described elsewhere in the interviews (Berg, 2004, p.85). The following table (Table 5.1) highlights the general demographic background of the research participants from both indigenous communities during the fieldwork period in Bangladesh.

### Table: 5.1 Demographic profiles of the participants

| Garo Community | | | Chakma Community | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Age** | **Marital status** | **Name** | **Age** | **Marital Status** |
| Amrita Luxshum | 40 | Unmarried | Aruna Chakma | 27 | Widow |
| Ajanta Mankin | 37 | Married | Anjali Chakma | 45 | Widow |
| Bani Daru | 23 | Unmarried | Bindu Chakma | 35 | Married |
| Chaitali Rechil | 34 | Married | Charu Chakma | 18 | Married |
| Dipali Sangma | 29 | Married | Dristi Chakma | 29 | Married |
| Elena Marak | 28 | Married | Esha Chakma | 25 | Unmarried |
| Fara Nokrek | 34 | Married | Falguni Chakma | 20 | Unmarried |
| Geet Rechil | 19 | Unmarried | Gauri Chakma | 37 | Married |
| Garima Drong | 38 | Married | Ganga Chakma | 43 | Married |
| Hena Toju | 33 | Married | Himani Chakma | 50 | Married |
| Joya Dalu | 42 | Married | Joti Chakma | 24 | Married |
| Kanika Banowari | 28 | Married | Kalpona Chakma | 36 | Married |
| Laboni Mangsang | 43 | Married | Leena Chakma | 38 | Married |
| Mausomi Drong | 47 | Widow | Mina Chakma | 35 | Married |
| Nilima Mankin | 31 | Married | Nandita Chakma | 48 | Widow |
| Pratima Bazi | 39 | Widow | Pushpa Chakma | 20 | Unmarried |
| Rachana Sangma | 36 | Married | Rani Chakma | 28 | Married |
| Sangita Mrong | 20 | Married | Shila Chakma | 36 | Married |
| Shamoli Laksham | 50 | Married | Suparna Chakma | 28 | Married |
| Trisha Chisim | 26 | Married | Tara Chakma | 30 | Married |

Source: Fieldwork

**Note:** All the names of research participants have been altered to preserve anonymity.

The above table highlights the fact that interviewees were of different ages, and that, of the Garo women, three were unmarried and two were widowed. Of the Chakma women, three were unmarried and three were widowed. Participants were carefully selected to include individuals who both wanted to participate and met the objectives of the research.

The personal and socio-cultural aspects of these indigenous women's lives were investigated using the three major themes of marriage, cultural life and religion, and these themes had sub-themes (see: Figure 5.1). Each of the themes covers diverse

positions of social exclusion and inclusion related to the women's personal and socio-cultural lives.

**Figure 5.1: A thematic diagram of personal and socio-cultural aspects of social exclusion and inclusion**
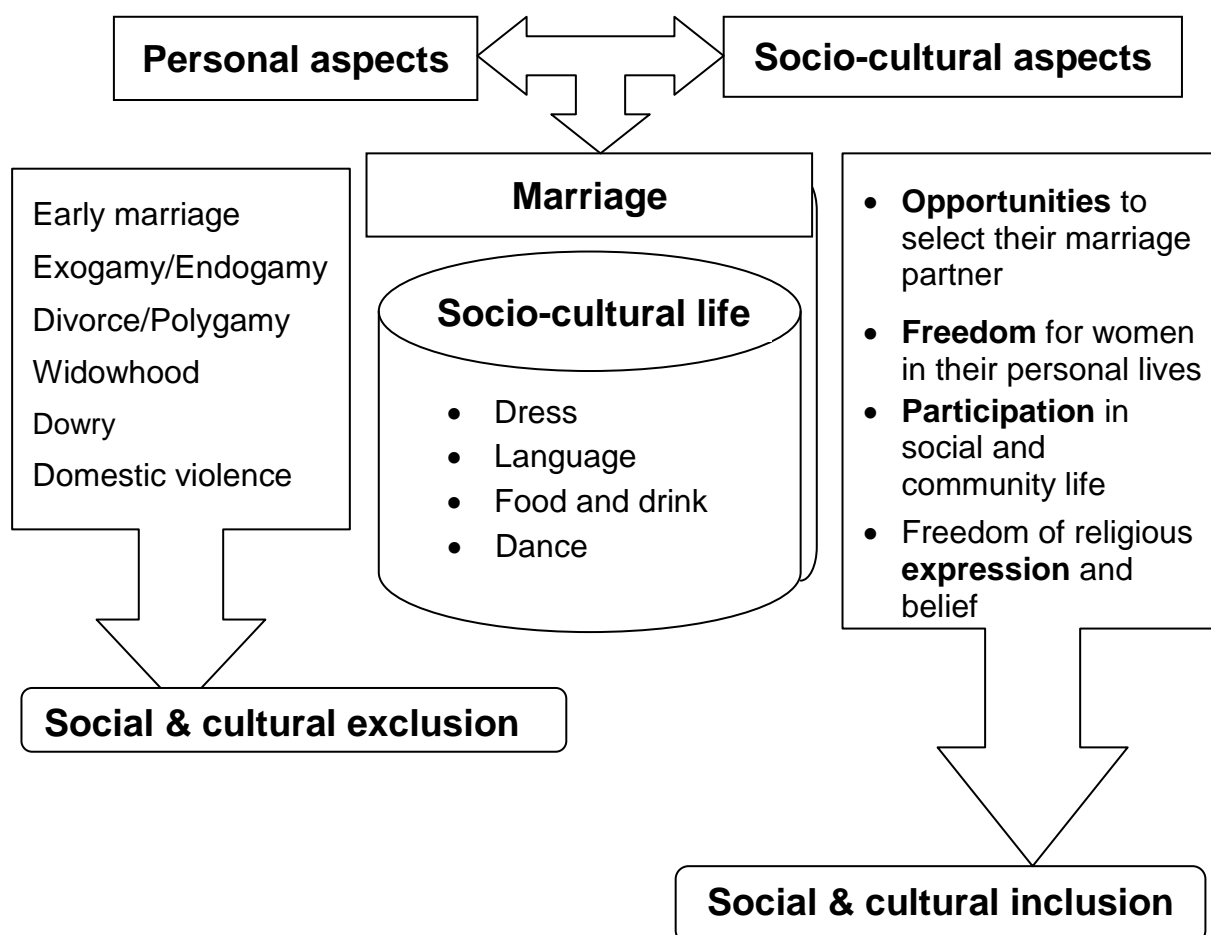


The above diagram shows how the personal and socio-cultural aspects of indigenous women's lives have influenced their social and cultural exclusion and inclusion, and these processes will be discussed in the following sections, drawing on evidence from the empirical findings of this research. It indicates that forms of marriage, dowry, divorce, widowhood and domestic violence are explicitly linked with the theme of marriage, and consequently women, especially rural indigenous women, face obstacles arising from these issues which will be briefly discussed in the analysis presented in this chapter. Nevertheless, the diagram also indicates that cultural life, or life style (i.e. language, dress, food and drink), and religion play a significant role in the opportunities that indigenous people, especially women, may or may not have to integrate into mainstream society in Bangladesh. As a result, I would like to argue that different cultural lives and religious practices may influence

the process of social exclusion for indigenous people, especially women, in Bangladesh.

## 5.2 Marriage

Marriage is a key element of gender relationships where individual decision-making processes interact with 'power and control' in relationships in the domestic sphere. In South Asian cultures, marriage is considered an economic and social bond between families (Guru, 2009), and within this bond women often have to negotiate consideration of their personal likes and dislikes. In this section, I would like to discuss the role played by the age at which women marry, they way in which their marital partner is selected, and marriage-related issues such as dowry, divorce, widowhood and domestic violence within their household. The section will examine the concept of 'power and control' in relationships, identifying how much control indigenous women have in their personal lives. At the same time, the analysis will indicate the ways in which indigenous women are excluded and included from wider society with regard of to their socio-cultural differences from the rest of Bangladeshi society.

### 5.2.1 Age at marriage

Bangladesh has the highest rate of early marriage in South Asia, with the median age at marriage being 16.4 years for women (Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2007), as against 16.0 in the previous BDHS (2004) report. This it is still 18 months below the legal minimum age for marriage in Bangladesh. Consequently, a UNICEF IRIN report (2009) shows that 64 percent of girls get married before the legal minimum age. According to law, the legal minimum age for marriage is 21 for boys and 18 for girls.

This leads to one-third of women being either pregnant or mothers by the age of 20 (BDHS, 2007). In addition, early female marriage is associated with a number of poor social and physical outcomes for young women and their offspring. On average, girls who marry as adolescents have attained lower schooling levels, have a lower social status in their husbands' families, report less reproductive control, and suffer higher rates of maternal mortality and domestic violence (Jensen and Thornton, 2003).

Early marriage is more common amongst the poorest girls, especially in the rural areas of Bangladesh. One study shows that Bengali women, with the exception of urban upper-class women, are particularly stigmatized in their marriage and economic activities, especially in rural areas (Parveen, 2007). In this context, I would like to argue that Bangladeshi rural women are more segregated and controlled in their personal lives, particularly in their choice in marriage and their power of domestic decision-making, by the norms of the patriarchal society (Sebstad and Cohen, 2000). According to the Pathfinder International/Bangladesh Report (2006, p. 2),

> *Girls in Bangladesh often enter into marriage well before their eighteenth birthday, sometimes when they are barely teenagers, due to financial struggles and cultural norms. When a girl enters marriage without the psychological maturity necessary to manage her relationship with her husband and in-laws, or the physical maturity necessary to cope with pregnancy, it puts her at a disadvantage for life. She is less able to negotiate crucial aspects of her life, such as the use of contraception, with her husband.*

I would argue that the age of marriage is an important personal issue, as it helps to identify the degree of control women have over their exclusion within the domestic sphere in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. It also indicates the degree of freedom women have to express their likes and dislikes in relation to their conjugal life. Focussing on the age of marriage from a social exclusion and inclusion perspective also suggests that rejection of girls' education is likely to be a cause of early marriage in Bangladesh. The process of social inclusion leads to the elimination of constraints on educational opportunities around the world.

Apart from this, most Bengali women from poor families, especially those living in rural areas, are unable to make decisions for themselves, and early marriage controls their ability to participate in domestic decisions. But if poor rural women do not get married at an early age, they risk never getting suitable grooms. In European societies the notion of 'spinsters' (Jeffreys, 1997) has the same meaning.

The age of marriage is an important element in getting a suitable partner, and failure to marry at an early age can result in difficulties for women in Bangladesh. However, there is no existing research which offers similar information about Bengali or

indigenous men's position with regard to age at marriage or their control over marriage decisions.  Informally I would say that in Bangladesh in most cases men are likely to marry when they able to provide financial security for a wife, and thus they may have a certain control over the marriage decision. Against this background, we shall look at interviewees' ages at marriage in both communities during the fieldwork period in 2009.

**Table 5.2: Age at marriage reported by interviewees**

| Garo Community | | | Chakma Community | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Name | Age | Age at marriage | Name | Age | Age at marriage |
| Ajanta Mankin | 37 | 19 | Aruna Chakma* | 27 | 16 |
| Chaitali Rechil | 34 | 27 | Anjali Chakma* | 45 | 19 |
| Dipali Sangma | 29 | 19 | Bindu Chakma | 35 | 18 |
| Elena Marak | 28 | 22 | Charu Chakma | 18 | 17 |
| Fara Nokrek | 34 | 21 | Dristi Chakma | 29 | 21 |
| Garima Drong | 38 | 23 | Gauri Chakma | 37 | 20 |
| Hena Toju | 33 | 23 | Ganga Chakma | 43 | 22 |
| Joya Dalu | 42 | 24 | Himani Chakma | 50 | 17 |
| Kanika Banowari | 28 | 21 | Joti Chakma | 24 | 23 |
| Laboni Mangsang | 43 | 17 | Kalpona Chakma | 36 | 22 |
| Mausomi Drong* | 47 | 18 | Leena Chakma | 38 | 19 |
| Nilima Mankin | 31 | 23 | Mina Chakma | 35 | 18 |
| Pratima Bazi* | 39 | 17 | Nandita Chakma* | 48 | 17 |
| Rachana Sangma | 36 | 24 | Rani Chakma | 28 | 20 |
| Sangita Mrong | 20 | 20 | Shila Chakma | 36 | 18 |
| Shamoli Laksham | 50 | 16 | Suparna Chakma | 28 | 23 |
| Trisha Chisim | 26 | 22 | Tara Chakma | 30 | 21 |

**Note:**

1. * Their current marital status is widow.
2. I interviewed 20 women from each community. Of these, three were found to be single/not married from each community.

3.   All the names of research participants have been altered to preserve anonymity. Chakma women always keep 'Chakma' as their last name, while a Garo woman keeps the name of her clan as her last name.

There was no specific age for marriage in the Garo and Chakma communities. According to the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, the current legal age for marriage is 18 for females and 21 for males in Bangladesh. The mean age of marriage in the Garo community is 21 for a woman, whereas it is 19 years in the Chakma community. Amrita Luxshum (aged 40), one of the Garo interviewees said:

*It is very difficult to find a groom for an overage girl, especially one over 28 years. And if a woman is highly educated, then it is much harder to find a suitable groom ...I am looking for a man, but usually the people I find suitable do not like me as my age is almost 40 now. It is not that I have only just decided to get married. I have been looking for a man since I was 32 years old, after I completed my education. But I have realized that generally men are interested in young women, and they do not show any interest in me . . . and those men who want to marry me are not educated like me. Sometimes I have received marriage proposals from aged widowers.*

Another research participant from the Chakma community noted that:

*A Chakma woman usually gets married from the age of 17 or 18 on. However, nowadays a lot of Chakma women are getting married at a later age, especially between 25 and 28. Actually, it depends on their families or on their parents' or guardians' willingness and their financial and social status within their community* (Esha Chakma, aged 25).

The findings indicate that the situation of women, especially in rural areas, is likely to be similar across Bangladesh. As I have discussed (see Chapter 2), in rural areas of Bangladesh, in poor families, parents or legal guardians control marriage decisions for women. In such circumstances, women are less likely to exercise autonomy in their marriage decisions. Even though a girl's parents may have little control over marriage negotiations, they are anxious about losing time because of the much greater premium on a girl's youthfulness, whereas for boys, youthfulness is actually a disadvantage (Amin and Lopita, 2008). The data from indigenous communities indicate that indigenous women may have enjoyed a little freedom in their personal

lives, especially Garo women, who practice a matrilineal culture within their community. But the data also suggest that their parents or guardians have fears that indigenous girls may make an unsuitable match if they make their own choice, or if they are the victims of the malicious gossip that is often circulated about young girls of marriageable age. This situation is similar to that described in studies by Amin and Lopita (2008) where the authors explain that a girl's sexuality is controlled by the community's and the wider society's code of conduct, and the age of marriage is often negotiated according to the demands of the marriage market.

Early marriage is considered one of the prominent factors in low educational attainment among females, and one that leads to lower participation in economic activities as their physical mobility becomes more restricted after marriage (Khatun, 2002). This is supported by findings in a study by Parveen (2007), where the author states that child marriage or early marriage is one of the most important causes of lower social status among rural women in Bangladesh. During the field work for this thesis, it was observed that child marriage is almost unheard of in either of the two communities being studied. Given this, I would like to argue that indigenous women do have some freedom to select their marriage partner, as they are likely to get married at the required legal age (as their age of marriage customarily follows State law). The evidence indicates that if marriages take place at an early age, women are likely to face social exclusion in their life because if a woman gets married under age or at a comparatively young age, she may not be able to give her consent to entering married life. Considering this, I can argue that Bengali rural women are likely to face 'a life of exclusion', and that marriage can result in negative behavioural changes that fulfil the prophecy of exclusion. From my research, I can argue that the position of Chakma and Garo indigenous women is better than that of Bengali rural women when it comes to the age of marriage.

## 5.2.2 Forms of marriage

In this chapter, discussion of forms of marriage is relevant as it shows the degree of control and freedom in decision-making allowed women in their personal lives when it comes to selecting their marital partners in patriarchal and matrilineal societies. Traditionally, Bengali women, especially in rural areas, are less likely to choose their marital partner by themselves (Amin and Lopita, 2008). However, in some urban areas girls' preferences are directly or indirectly considered in selecting their

partners, due to the concept of 'modernization' in Bangladesh. Traditional law and customs dictate that women are often excluded from any decisions about their own marriage, and this issue will be discussed in the analysis section of the chapter that follows. According to the research participants, at present there are two forms of marriage which have traditionally been practiced by the Garo and Chakma communities in Bangladesh.

## *Arranged marriage*

In the Garo community, a marriage proposal comes first from the woman's *ma'chong* not from the man's *ma'chong*[8]. In the first instance, the *chra*[9] and the parents of the girl send a marriage proposal to the *chra* and the parents of the boy. Then, the engagement takes place between the couple's *chras* and their parents without the groom and bride necessarily being informed. However, the groom is usually concerned in his marriage, though the bride is seldom consulted. When they are informed, the boy and the girl have the right to refuse the marriage proposal and to make their own choice. On this subject, one of the research participants said:

> *I was 25 years old when I got married to my partner. We liked each other for a couple of years before our marriage. We had graduated from the same university. One of my maternal uncles who knew both of us formally proposed the marriage to my in-laws. After that, both of our parents and the chras accepted our marriage proposal, and then the marriage took place with some other ceremonies in our village* (Hena Toju, aged 33).

On the other hand, in the Chakma community, arranged marriages are usually the work of a matchmaker (*sabala*) who sets up contact between the groom's and the bride's families. In an arranged marriage, the opinion of the guardians, especially male members of the family, is given priority in the choosing of a marriage partner for a daughter or son. In some cases, parents and other elder members of the groom's or bride's family arrange an informal discussion of a possible match within a community, and then they consult relatives on both sides with the help of a matchmaker.

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[8] *Machong* means a group of people who are regarded as kin because they have a common mother, i.e. the relationship is strictly exogamous.
[9] *Chra* means maternal uncle.

### *Love marriage*

Love marriage or the independent choice of a partner is common practice in both indigenous communities. However, after selecting or liking a partner, Garo indigenous women, usually inform their parents and then their parents inform their *chras*. The following case study describes how love marriage is practiced within the Garo community.

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**Case study:** Trisha Chisim, aged 26, a married Garo woman, describes how, at present, it is common for young people to choose their partners themselves. She said:

*I was 18 when I fell in love with my husband. I was a first year student in college and my husband also studied in same college in the second year. After completion of his college education, he went for his higher studies in Bachelor of Arts (BA) in the town of Mymensingh. Unfortunately, I could not continue my studies after HSC (Higher Secondary School) examination. After I completed my HSC qualification, I found a job as a house tutor in the Christian Missionary School in Haluaghat within a year. By this time, my husband had completed his BA degree and found a job in the local NGO. Then, we decided to get married and informed our parents and asked for their consent. Our parents and chra recognised that we were not from the same clan[10], so they easily accepted our proposal.*

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In the Chakma community, in most cases, a groom first needs to inform his family about his decisions to marry. The Chakma male interviewees claimed that choosing a life partner for themselves is increasing day by day within their community, though they respect the need for their guardians' consent, which is considered a formal ritual for every love marriage. The following case study describes one love marriage in the Chakma community.

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[10] As I have discussed, marriage between members of the same clan is not permitted by the matrilineal laws of the Garo community in Bangladesh.

**Case study:** Suporna Chakma (aged 28), a married Chakma woman, said:

*Nowadays love marriages involve a formal marriage process in some families. Traditionally, marriages were socially approved by choosing partners through our guardians, who usually sought the consent of their son. However, with the influence from Bengalis and other tribal communities in Bangladesh, Chakma men and women now often select their partner themselves. . . . My husband and I chose each other independently, and then my husband asked for consent from his parents. According to our marriage rituals, before marriage the groom's father or guardian has to visit to the bride's house three times with different kinds of gifts. At the time of the third visit, the groom's parents, accompanied by other older relatives, came to my father's house with a bottle of liquor to ascertain his mind. My father received the bottle cordially, which showed he was of the same mind, and then they fixed a date for the engagement. After that, the groom's party invited my father to visit the groom's house with other relatives from my side.*

Not only female members of the Chakma community but also male members stated that nowadays Chakma women are given the opportunity to choose their own marital partner, indirectly. In the past, it even happened that the bride was taken by force to the groom's house (Sattar, 1971, p.296). It also happened that in some cases the bridal party went to the bride's home in a bourgeois style (with the groom's family spending a lot of money to represent him as a member of a wealthy family), which is also now extremely rarely seen in this community' (ibid, 1971, p.296). However, there are still some rural areas where the patriarchal culture gives priority to the groom's decisions over the girl's. On the other hand, according to the formal laws of matrilineal society (in the Garo community), every woman has a right to choose her partner herself, though in order to respect their traditional laws; women cannot select their marital partner from their own kinship group. However, from the findings above, I would argue that indigenous women's personal lives are directly and indirectly controlled by the male members of these particular communities, even though the Garo community's formal structure follows the matrilineal system. The findings suggest that love marriages are to be found in highly educated families, but in poorly educated families women's opinions tend to be overlooked in most cases. This argument will be briefly discussed with regard to some marriage-related customs and practices, such as the process of marriage registration, divorce, widowhood, and the

giving of dowries, and these issues may give a clear picture of the role of indigenous women within their particular social settings.

## 5.2.3 Marriage-related customs and practices and the position of women

### 5.2.3.1 The process of marriage registration

The practice of marriage registration is an important indicator of indigenous women's level of awareness about their marriage. I would like to argue that the registration of marriage enhances women's security within their society and protects their marital life from any inconvenience or difficulty, and that through this legal process, women are likely to show their interest in the decision that they shall marry. The findings indicate that at present the majority of Garo people practice the Christian religion, and their marriages usually take place in church. Under Christian law, their marriages are now registered by the Church and the bride and groom have to sign a registration document in front of their priest and other family members. However, those who practice the traditional *Sangsarek[11]* religion do not follow any registration process. Of this situation, a Garo woman interviewee said:

> *Nowadays marriage normally takes place in church, whereas in the past marriage took place in the house of the bride. Thus, now bridegrooms have to sign in front of the priest in church, but in the past our chra and both parents usually witnessed the marriage. This is still practiced in remote places or villages* (Shamoli Laksham, aged 50).

On the other hand, traditionally, Chakma marriages do not necessarily require registration in legal form. At present, Chakma marriages take place in the temple or in front of the priest at home. On the whole, in arranged marriages, the priest and both sides' legal guardians (especially their parents or relatives) and the local people are considered the witnesses of the marriage. However, in a love marriage, if the bride and groom want to be married without the consent of their guardians, the priest and some local friends are found to witness their marriage. This means there is no legal document issued for the marriage unless any party requires this certificate. It was also observed that those respondents who got married more than 12 years ago

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[11]  The word *Sangsarek* originated from the Bengali word *Sangsare which means household or family affairs.* The Garo people's *Sangsarek* religious beliefs are similar to those of animists or believers in spirits. Their religious cults are concerned with natural forces and deities (Sattar, 1983).

did not have any marriage certificate, due to a lack of awareness of the marriage registration process within their community. Describing this situation, one of the research participants named Himani Chakma (aged 40) said:

> *When I got married, we were not aware of the marriage registration system. However, our parents, relatives and local elderly people were witnesses for our marriage. . . . In some remote villages, people still do not practice marriage registration, due to a lack of awareness.*

The above discussion indicates that Garo women's level of awareness is better than Chakma women's in relation to marriage registration, and they are likely to have a higher literacy level, which helps to give them greater knowledge about the benefits of marriage registration.

However, the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974, was enacted to strengthen the inducements for civil registration, and it states that, 'Every marriage solemnized under Muslim law shall be registered in accordance with the provisions of this Act' and establishes the licensing of *nikah* (marriage) registrars. The punishment for not registering a marriage is a prison sentence and/or a fine. It was found that, in the absence of specific Bangladeshi government instructions regarding Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian marriage registrations, people from these communities issued a marriage certificate signed by the priest who solemnized the marriage or the administration of the church or temple where the marriage was solemnized. The format for these documents may vary, but all will contain the same information as the Muslim marriage certificate, such as the parties concerned, details of the wedding ceremony and information concerning the identity of the priest who registered the marriage.

### 5.2.3.2 Exogamy and endogamy

A discussion of exogamy and endogamy is relevant here as it will explain how indigenous people, especially women's personal lives, are controlled in terms of selecting their marital partner via an exogamous or an endogamous marriage culture. As I previously discussed (Chapter 4), the Garo community is based on a matrilineal social structure, and children's identity comes from the mother's side of the family. Therefore, all the research participants from the Garo community said that marriage was regulated by exogamous practices, which means that marriage is not

allowed within the same clan. For example, a *Drong* (one of the clans) cannot marry a *Drong*, and a *Rechil* (another clan) cannot marry a *Rechil.* Of this tradition, one of the Garo women participants named Rachana Sangma (aged 36) stated that:

> *We strictly practice our traditional marriage laws. Therefore, a Garo boy or girl cannot marry in the same clan. If a marriage takes place between members of the same clan, they are ostracised by society.*

Another participant from the Garo community gave a similar answer:

> *Garos cannot marry within the same clan. They are also prohibited from marriage with their family or machong. We believe that marriage within same machong is a great offence. We believe that marrying within the clan is like marrying one's own father or mother. If marriage within same clan or madong (mother's family) or backdong (any close kin) takes place, the partners are not accepted by our community* (Shamoli Laksham, aged 50).

According to Banglapedia (2006), if someone violates this exogamous rule, he or she is ousted from the village, as was confirmed by the Garo participants in this research. Of this tradition, Playfair (1909) said, 'Marriage is strictly exogamous among the Garo society and the husband and wife must belong to different clans and motherhoods. Those people who do not follow these exogamy rules and marry within their own clan are considered to have committed a social sin'. However, Playfair (1909) also found that the rule of exogamy was weakening. He found that many people were breaking with the old custom, and that nearly 10 per cent of marriages nowadays are in violation of the rules of exogamous marriage. Some people even go so far as to marry within their own motherhood, though breaches of this rule are rarer than breaches of the first rule, and are still looked upon with proportionate disapproval by the orthodox (Playfair,1909).

On this subject Chowdhury (2007) stated that, 'At present, marriage between a man and woman belonging to the same clan is not uncommon. If there is marriage within the same clan, the couple is ridiculed as *bacdong.* In the past, it was treated as an offence, and those couples were not allowed to stay in the village. They were chased away from the locality. With the passage of time, the community has accepted this derivation. However, even today marriage in the same *machong* is strictly prohibited and one who breaks this law is called *madong* '. Nowadays, many young Garo

people are seen to marry within their own *machong*. As a result, I would like to argue that sometimes the matrilineal rules and traditional marriage practices are overlooked, and these people tend to follow Christian Garo marriage rules. On this subject, most of the research participants stated that:

> *A Christian Garo usually only marries a Christian Garo. If marriage takes place between a Christian Garo and a non-Christian Garo, the non-Christian Garo must convert to Christianity. Although nowadays some people marry Bengali Muslims and then they convert to their partner's religion. If any Bengali Muslim woman marries a Garo man, then it is considered a terrible disgrace for the man's family.*

Dealing with this topic, Bal (1999) argues that nowadays Garos tend to be quite flexible about their exogamous rules; but if a Garo woman marries a Bengali Muslim man, she is judged very negatively by her own society and by mainstream society as well. Similarly, Garo male participants said that if a Garo man marries a Bengali woman then he too is ousted from his family and the Garo community. Shamoli Laksham (aged 50), a married Garo woman, said:

> *Nowadays it might be acceptable in our community to marry in same family or machong, but it would be totally unacceptable in our community if I wanted to marry a Bengali Muslim man. Generally, if a marriage happens between different religious practices, then it is usually the woman who has to convert and accept her husband's religion.*

Bal (1999) states that today more and more Garo young men resist moving into their in-law's household, and it is becoming popular to establish independent households, instead of moving in with the parents of either partner.

By contrast, Chakma people can marry either within the clan (endogamy) or outside the clan (exogamy). It was stated by Chakma women participants in the research that the lineage of male children remains unchanged in all circumstances, though girls are considered as members of their husbands' clan after their marriage. Sattar's (1971) studies describe a common dilemma: if a widowed Chakma woman with children marries a second time into a different clan, to which clan are the children considered to belong? The answer is that since the mother feeds the children, they

change their clan with her, and this finding was supported by the research participants.

From the above discussion, I would like to argue that the customary practice of exogamous marriage within the Garo community creates exclusion within their own community both for men and women. On the other hand, Chakma women and men enjoy more flexibility to select their own partners according to customary laws that promote social inclusion within their community. This means Garo women and men cannot choose their marital partner from other communities, unless they are willing to be humiliated and excluded from their own community, and this is theoretically a barrier to social inclusion, and one that is almost absent in the Chakma community. As a result of this situation, I would argue that patriarchal culture likely shows that men dominate over women, and women are more often found in marginalized positions within their kinship groups and in their household and community, which creates barriers to social inclusion. Therefore, I suggest that the position of Chakma indigenous women is better rather than that of women in other communities in Bangladesh, as Chakma women's choice of a marital partner is not controlled by community values (i.e. exogamy). However, the data also indicate that Garo men are also affected by their exogamous marriage practice, which controls their marriage decision as well as that of Garo women.

### 5.2.3.3 Divorce

Divorce is an important indicator in identifying women's power in, and control over, their conjugal relationships. Divorce is on the whole considered a 'shame and dishonour' in Bangladesh, and in most cases women will be judged responsible for the circumstances leading to divorce, whereas men's role is often overlooked. Muslim law permits divorce, but in practice people have a tendency to hide divorce and separation situations from the outside world.

According to the research participants, divorce is allowed by both their communities, though it is rarely practiced in either. The reasons for divorce were given by the research participants from both communities as the following:

- if a wife or husband is unable to produce a child or to carry out household duties properly

- if a wife or husband is mentally ill

- if a wife suffers severe domestic violence because of excessive alcohol consumption by her husband, etc.

In the Chakma community the terms and conditions of divorce are decided upon by the Headman or *Roaza* in consultation with ten other elderly persons from the community. If either party is proved guilty, he or she has to pay a fine. For a certain period after the divorce, the bride is entitled to a fixed rate of financial support. If the whole thing proves too complicated for the Headman's wisdom, then it is taken to the Chief for arbitration. The Chief is, in fact, the ultimate authority and overall source of wisdom in their 'weal and woe' (Sattar, 1971). When discussing divorce, the Garo research participants stated that a man and a woman must observe conjugal fidelity, though traditional law permits a man or a woman to seek relief from their conjugal life if the conduct of their partner compels one of them to do so. One of the Garo participants said:

> *In our community, men and women have equal rights to divorce on proper grounds. This generally happens if a wife or husband commits adultery with another man or woman. Sometimes this may happen because a man or woman is unable to produce offspring* (Laboni Mangsang, aged 42).

Another participant Pratima Bazi (aged, 39) said:

> *I have not seen any divorce in our society recently, but unfortunately some Garo people (especially Garo men) are influenced by the mainstream society and this leads them (Garo men) to leave their wife.*

According to the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974, in Bangladesh, divorce is only established by a judgment of the court, and must be preceded by reconciliation efforts by the judge. Efforts at reconciliation are not to exceed three months. During my field visits, no divorce case was found in Garo and Chakma communities in Bangladesh. Subsequently, I established that divorce is not practiced by indigenous women, though sometimes a wife may leave her husband's house and stay at her parent's house for the foreseeable future.

From the above discussion, it seems to me that the concepts of divorce, as it occurs in both patriarchal and matrilineal communities in Bangladesh, have been

inadequately explained and unfairly stigmatized, and that they should be seen in relation to the fact that most indigenous women are not economically dependent on their partners or families, as will be discussed in a later chapter (Chapter 8). On this subject, Guru (2009) shows that though divorce can have the most devastating effects on women in terms of their exclusion, it can also give them opportunities and optimism for their future. In this research I have seen that women have a tendency to accept the trouble or inconvenient circumstances their conjugal life brings them. These difficulties are not necessarily caused by their partners. Sometimes the tension comes from their own families or from in-laws families. In this situation, separation and divorce may overcome a negative environment. The fact is that women (and sometimes men) cannot think about separation or divorce in an inconvenient situation unless they secure support from their family and from the community. Therefore, most Bangladeshi women, especially in rural areas, are reluctant to speak out about their conjugal problems or tensions within their own families to the legal authorities, due to the stigma attached to this and the inadequate social security arrangements in Bangladesh. As a result, I would like to argue that indigenous women's opportunities and capabilities are likely to be controlled by the difficulty of obtaining divorce.

### 5.2.3.4 Widowhood

Widowhood is another important indicator of women's position within their households and communities in Bangladesh. The status of widows can be explained in terms of the control a widow has of her personal life in matrilineal and patriarchal social settings. Owen (2001) states that widows are subject to discrimination according to the customs, religious laws and inheritance rights of patriarchal societies across a wide range of cultures in developing countries. According to the World Bank (2000), millions of the world's widows, of all ages, endure extreme poverty, ostracism, domestic violence, homelessness, ill health and discrimination due to laws and customs that are justified by 'culture' and 'tradition'. This particular theme will help us to look at the nature of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo Communities in Bangladesh.

In previous chapters on the literature (Chapters 2 and 3), I discussed the fact that almost 90 per cent of the population of Bangladesh are Muslim and the country is

regulated by the Muslim laws. These laws encourage remarriage and do not lead to a widow being disinherited. For example, under sharia (Qurannic law), a woman is entitled to one eighth of her husband's estate, and a share of her parents' estate that is half as large as that of her male siblings. Therefore, formally, a Muslim female widow is better off than the Hindu widows of India (Owen, 2001). Owen (2001) describes how Indian society, like all patriarchal societies, confers social status on a woman through a man; hence, in the absence of a man, she herself becomes a nonentity and suffers social death. *Sati* (widow burning) is the ultimate manifestation of this situation.

In this study, all the Garo female participants said that a Garo widow does not hold a distinct status, and does not have any food or dress restrictions placed upon her to mark her off from the rest of society. Widows are treated the same as other women in the society. A widow can also remarry with someone from her husband's clan. However, according to the Garo interviewees, the law of *A'kim* (traditional law) decrees that once a man or a woman has contracted a marriage, he or she will never be free to remarry a person from another clan, even after the death of their partner. On this subject, Mausomi Drong (aged 47), a Garo widow interviewee said:

> *After the death of my husband, if I wanted to, I could remarry any male from my husband's clan. On the very day of the death of my husband, the chra and maharis of his clan both proposed that I consider remarrying someone from my husband's clan. But I didn't want to remarry because I respected my husband's love and affection, and also I didn't want my children to have a step father.*

According to Banglapedia (2003), 'In Garo society, after the death of her husband a wife can claim any man without a wife in the husband's clan as her new husband. However, the bride and the bridegroom may often not be a match in age. After the death of the husband, a woman can even have her own son-in-law as her husband. In such a situation, the daughter and the mother may live peacefully as co-wives. If, on consideration of any special situation in a clan, someone marries a minor girl, he can have a sexual relationship with his mother-in-law until such time as his wife attains maturity'. However, my research participants said that currently this type of

practice is very uncommon among Garo people. Chaitali Rechil (aged 34), one of the Garo interviewees, explained:

> *Since our conversion to Christianity, we do not practice this type of traditional belief, though the Indian Garo people may still practice it.*

Another comment on widowhood came from Aruna Chakma (aged 27):

> *I got married when I was 19 years old. My husband passed away after four years of our marriage in a road accident. I was pregnant at the time, and three months later I delivered a girl child. In our community it is not easy for a woman with a child to remarry. If I did this, I would have to face so many negative attitudes from local people. It is hard to find a groom who will willingly take responsibility for my child as well.*

From the above findings, it can be argued that, although in theory divorce is permissible in both communities, in practice it is really difficult for women, especially rural women, to think about remarriage when they are widowed. Many rural widows receive nothing from their in-laws and are often victims of violence, evicted from their homes and robbed of their household possessions (Shamim, 1995). A 1995 survey on property inheritance in Bangladesh revealed that only 25 per cent of the widows sampled had received their rightful share of their inheritance from either of their parents, and only 32 per cent from their husbands (Shamim and Salahuddin, 1995). Apart from this, the above situation highlights a change in indigenous communities due to the influence of the patriarchal values of mainstream society and mainstream religious beliefs.

Even though the laws in Bangladesh protect Bengali Muslim women, in practice widows, especially those who are illiterate and live in rural areas, are subject to oppressive patriarchal traditions. Widows are the poorest and most vulnerable group in Bangladesh, since they are often deprived of their rightful inheritance (Owen, 2001), and are less likely to remarry than widowers. In the Garo community, if a young woman loses her husband without having any children, then she is usually forced to remarry and enter a new conjugal life, due to traditional property inheritance laws, even if she does not wish to do so. This means that the Garo matrilineal system directly excludes women from taking their own decisions about how to achieve a better life. Similarly, in the Chakma community, if widows think

about remarriage, it is considered an exceptional case, and these women may have to face negative stereotyping from their community. This is due to a patriarchal social structure in which, if widowers want to remarry, the issue is considered more sympathetically (a widower cannot take care of his children, he cannot carry out household duties, and so on). So, indigenous women are less likely to make their own decisions in terms of marriage or marital affairs, even though research participants recognized that they had more power to control their personal life than rural Bengali Muslim women. In practice, their cultural taboos and traditional laws may impede their well-being, as the above statements from interviewees demonstrate. To sum up, indigenous widows have an excluded or marginalized position within their households and in their society.

## 5.2.3.5 Dowry/bride price

Dowry has been a dominant factor in marriage in Bangladesh during the last 30 years. This is despite the fact that a bride price is an uncommon notion for Bengali societies, though the concept of dowry and bride-price are found in many indigenous societies in Bangladesh. The discussion of dowry and bride-price is relevant for this research as it helps us to understand the nature of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially women, within their communities and within wider society. Generally, a dowry consists of gifts or a payment by a bride's family to the groom or his family at the time of the marriage. In most cases, women are not informed about dowry demands before marriage. Dowries are often a monetary deal between two men like the bride's father and the groom or the groom's family. Such cultural arrangements completely violate the dignity of women and the quality of their personal relationships (Asian Legal Resource Centre, 2005). They deeply affect the lives of women in a social and cultural sense. As I have previously discussed (Chapter 2), women are considered less powerful and of a lower status than men within their households, due to patriarchal practices in Bangladesh. For this reason, emotional and verbal abuse of women were accepted by the female research participants of both communities, and domestic violence was viewed as a private affair within the family with little or no redress available to the victims (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association/BNWLA, 2009).

According to a recent report by Peter Davis (2008) of the University of Bath, dowry is one of the major causes of chronic poverty in Bangladesh. The researchers surveyed 2,000 households in 102 rural villages across Bangladesh, and these had originally been interviewed eight to 14 years before, so that the changes in poverty and well-being that had occurred in the interim could be assessed. Following this, the researchers combined household data with about 300 individual life histories to provide a deeper understanding of the causes of chronic poverty in the country, rather than using purely conventional quantitative research approaches. The study findings revealed that dowry payments of more than 200 times the daily wage and costly medical expenses are two major causes of chronic poverty in Bangladesh.

Another report from BNWLA (2009) highlighted that 4489 and 4061 cases of dowry related physical abuse in 2008 and 2009 respectively were filed, which are documented by police headquarters in Bangladesh. In this study, participants from both communities said that there was no system of *pawn* (mandatory marriage rules for Bengali Muslims) or dowry within their communities. However, most of the Garo participants said that if the bride's family was economically well-off, then her family would give something as a gift to the groom's family or the groom, especially when the arrangement was for the newly married couple to live in a new house, in order to show their love for their daughter. On this topic, a married Garo woman interviewee, Kanika Banowari (aged 28), said:

> *When I got married my parents and chra gave some household furniture and utensils such as a bed and bedding, a wardrobe and a cabinet as gifts, although this was not demanded by the groom or his family. According to our matrilineal marriage system, my husband and I have to settle down in my (the bride's) family. However, because of our occupation, we decided to settle down in town. In this situation my family arranged for some gifts for us as a new couple, as my family is financially well off.*

Similarly, according to the Chakma research participants, dowry was not practiced within their community, though they did have a traditional concept of *dava* (bride price), which was a common marriage component that had to be paid by the bridegroom's family to the bride's family. However, most of the Chakma women participants said that the concept of dowry had been introduced due to the influence of mainstream Bengali society.  Previously, the notion of bride price (*dava* money)

had not been so important in their community. In the past, the bride's father took a little amount of token money as a bride price from the groom's father to buy the necessary jewellery and clothes for the bride. Now some brides' families have to pay cash or give household furniture and jewellery to fulfil the demands of the groom's side. The following case study highlights current dowry practices in the Chakma community.

**Case study:** Joti Chakma (aged 24) got married at the age of 23. Her father and other older family members arranged the marriage with the help of a matchmaker. At the time of the marriage, the match maker demanded BDT 100,000.00 (£1000 GBP) on behalf of the groom's family from her father. Her father agreed to give BDT 50,000.00 (£500 GBP) to support the groom. Unfortunately, the matchmaker concealed this from the groom's family and told them the bride's father had agreed to give BDT 50,000 before the marriage and another BDT 50,000 after the marriage. As a result, the parents of the groom decided to hold the marriage within 15 days and her father gave them 50,000 BDT to fulfil his commitments. After some days of the marriage, her husband demanded BDT 50,000 immediately to settle business debts. Joti and her parents were really shocked by this unexpected demand from her in-laws' side. When, some days later, they contacted the matchmaker, he denied previously agreeing on a total of 50,000 BDT. Unfortunately her father could not manage the full amount of money. From that time, Joti's husband and her mother in-law started behaving badly toward her. She told me that it was easy to understand that this behaviour was mainly because of her father's failure to pay the full dowry on time. But she had to tolerate all the ill treatment in silence. Within a very short space of time, the verbal abuse was replaced by physical abuse like slapping, hair pulling and pushing. Joti told her mother about the ill-treatment and feared that her husband might divorce her at any moment. Joti's fathers managed to give her husband almost another 10,000 BTD, and begged pardon from him, but her in-laws were not happy. Now her father is trying to arrange more money, as if her husband divorces her she will have no chance of remarrying, as she is pregnant. Now she is staying at her father's house and waiting for this issue to be settled.

From the above findings, I would argue that dowry practices put women in a powerless position, especially the poor rural women of Bangladesh. Dowry practices shore up the barriers against social inclusion for both men and women in Bangladesh. The existence of these practices in a society obliges parents not to provide their daughters with an education, as they will need to spend lot of money

getting them married. Most of the Chakma women interviewees said that the ritual of bride price or dowry is likely to create a tension between the bride's and groom's families, and sometimes it opens the way to further demands later on, with increased greed leading to more payments from the bride's family. Given these problems, I would like to argue that instead of paying dowries, parents should safeguard their children, especially girls, from economic deprivation and violence by educating them. Education enhances people's knowledge about their rights within marriage and family relationships. Similarly, the parents of the bride and groom need to understand that the giving and taking of a dowry neither enhances their children's happiness nor gives them a sense of their own value in their marital life. A study at John Hopkins University by Campbell et al. (1995) even found that, due to dowry-related violence, women are at a higher risk of miscarriage and stillbirth, and that they risk giving birth to children of low weight, which can lead to neonatal and infant death.

The Government of Bangladesh is also concerned about this issue. Therefore, they have passed special laws to prohibit or control the practice of giving or taking dowries.  According to the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980, a dowry has been defined as, 'any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly (a) By one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage; or (b) By the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to the marriage or to any other person'.

Following the passing of that law, the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Ordinance of 1984 extended the definition of dowry to, 'any property or valuable security given at the time of marriage or at any time', which replaced the earlier 'at, before or after marriage' for the purpose of ensuring that loopholes were closed. Subsequently, it made the penalty for giving or taking a dowry tougher by extending the punishment from imprisonment for a maximum of one year to imprisonment for a maximum of five years with a minimum of one year. The offence of giving or taking a dowry had been cognizable, liable and non-compoundable under Section 8 of the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980.

From my analysis of the research reported above, I would like to argue that though the practice of giving and taking a dowry was initiated in mainstream Bengali society,

the tribal/indigenous communities were themselves responsible for its introduction into their communities, where the practice has been merged with the previously existing notion of 'gifts' and 'bride price'. This means that both patriarchal and matrilineal indigenous societies are responsible for this practice, according to their traditional cultural rituals of marriage, though the extent of this practice is likely to be less than in mainstream society.

### 5.2.3.6 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is another important sub-theme for this study, and it relates to human rights issues and social challenges throughout the world. It violates women's rights to equality and freedom, which are guaranteed under the constitution of Bangladesh. This section will concentrate on power and gender relationships in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. Most importantly, the discussion of domestic violence is relevant to identifying women's position within their household, and this is one of the major aims of this study. Generally, women in Bangladesh face multi-faceted forms of violence both within the home and outside it. Patriarchy is one of the major elements in creating gender inequality, which it imposes through its values. Many of these are embodied in rules that impose seclusion, taboos and stigmatization on women and condemn them to a subordinate position in society. In this regard, Jahan (1994) states that, 'Gender inequality is deeply embedded in the structure of the patriarchal society of Bangladesh. Male dominance and female subordination are basic tenets in our social structure. All Bangladeshi social institutions permit, even encourage, the demonstration of unequal power relations between the sexes and try to perpetuate the interests of patriarchy. Bangladeshi families offer instances of the display of male dominance in intimate relations in the form of marital violence.'

Domestic violence is a common feature in Bangladesh, though it may take different forms (Jahan, 1994). According to Chakma indigenous women, domestic violence is identified in terms of physical mistreatment, including beating by their husbands or in-laws within their household. In most cases, psychological, verbal and sexual abuse is overlooked. Most of the Chakma women research participants said that domestic conflicts like scolding, quarrelling, teasing, unfair accusations and sometimes slapping or beating by husbands and parents-in-law, and even by other

members of their husbands' families, exist in almost every family in Bangladesh. In such situations, women themselves often tend to ignore what is happening for the sake of their personal and family well-being. One of the Chakma male participants said:

*Every relationship at the domestic level has to face some inconvenience, and it is a common feature of conjugal life. If we want to stay with each other for a lifetime, we have to understand this situation. If we want to make a delicious curry, we need to use so many different spices, and of these some spices are sweet and some are hot, but mixtures of all spices can make a delicious curry for us. Conjugal life is like a mixture of different good and bad experiences from life.*

Most of the Chakma women said that husbands had the right to repress their wives, like their parents, as they are considered the wives' legal guardians. Therefore, it could be argued that women's own perception reinforces their subordinate position within their household.

In a similar way, Garo women interviewees said that domestic violence existed within their community, but the extent was not like in other communities (in Bengali society). According to the Garo and Chakma interviewees, Bengali women, especially rural women, face more violence than indigenous women in Bangladesh. Although most of the Garo women participants said that they were verbally abused by their partner or in-laws, they did not think of these behaviours as violent, as long they did not lead to physical mistreatment. This means that, in theory, Garo women's conjugal life is not improved by the fact that Garo women are in a better position due to their matrilineal society, except that Chakma women talked more about actual physical abuse.

I wanted to look at the ways in which the position of indigenous women impacted upon their domestic and individual well-being. Participant responses from both communities indicated that their perceptions of domestic violence were based on a misconception of what domestic violence was, and thus indigenous women were likely to accept domestic violence as a common feature of conjugal life. Although I am not arguing that Bangladeshi indigenous women are more stigmatized and oppressed than others, their understanding of this process may be constrained by their cultural and social settings. A recent report published by the Bangladesh

National Women Lawyers' Association (2009) mentions that women are reluctant to seek redress for gender based violence due to a number of factors, including their lack of access to legal and other support services; persistent gender discrimination regarding opportunities for education, employment, and compensation; hostile responses from law enforcement agencies; fear of being labelled bad and unchaste by society; and inadequate support from family, friends and peers (BNWLA, 2009, p.8). I would like to argue that their tendency to remain silent and their coping attitudes may have caused women's exclusion from active participation in domestic and public life, as they have tried to negotiate their daily life in Bangladesh. For this reason, we have to explain the nature of violence, as it may highlight the extent of compromise in daily life in Bangladesh.

**The nature of violence**

As I have argued in a previous chapter (Chapter 4), the philosophical understanding of this research is based on an interpretive model where reality is socially constructed and perceptions or meaning are understood according to people's (the research participants') explanations. Thus, it is important to look at how participants make sense of their surroundings (patriarchal and matrilineal social settings) and how they understand the social world. Therefore, an analysis of the nature of violence will help us to illustrate the power and control in intra-household relations between men and women in Bangladesh.

According to most Chakma women respondents, wife beating like slapping, scolding, calling someone humiliating names, as well as demanding that a wife leaves and returns to her parents' house, are the common things that they usually need to face from their husbands and sometimes from in-laws living in their household. However, the majority of the Chakma women are engaged in income-earning activities; and they are not encountering dowry-related violence like Bengali women, especially rural Bengali women. Although two Chakma women respondents said that the giving and taking of a dowry was not traditional in the Chakma community, it does now exist in that community. They have started to practice it just like mainstream society, though some people cleverly defined it in relation to their traditional marriage-related rituals. Similarly, Garo women participants mentioned that, 'Household conflict is a very common feature, and physical mistreatment is very often found, though it might

not be talked about publicly because of the shame this would bring. Generally, quarrels between husband and family members do not last long; but if such quarrels concern serious issues like an extra-marital relationship, or alcoholism, then this causes disputes to move to physical mistreatment like beating, slapping, scolding and so on'. In practice, drinking alcohol is a common practice in both communities. Thus, alcoholism on the part of husbands or men (especially heads of families) is often the primary cause of domestic violence, as is supported by Chakroborty and Ali's (2009) study. Most of the Chakma men interviewed also agreed that, 'If wives protest at excessive drinking, then conjugal conflict begins in the household and sometimes some men lose their temper and behave abnormally. But not every man beats his wife after drinking'. Most of the Garo male participants agreed with these comments.

The following case study gives a brief illustration of this situation in relation to members of the Chakma community.

> **Case study**: Suporna Chakma (aged 28) was married at the age of 23. Her husband Ratan Chakma (35) is a driver. They fell in love and got married with the consent of their parents. They have two children. After her marriage, she realized that her husband had some bad habits: he drank too much alcohol and sometimes he took drugs as well. Ratan also displayed aggressive behaviour in his village. Suporna was not informed about this before her marriage. Since she got married by her own choice, her parents now try to avoid her. When Suporna asks him about his behaviour, her husband becomes more aggressive towards her. He often beats her and sometimes he pushes her out of their home. Sometimes he threatens her that if she doesn't accept his drinking habit, he will go for a second marriage and send her back to her parents' home. Now, Suporna realizes that she made a big mistake. If she had not selected her life partner by herself, then she might be receiving the support of their parents. But unfortunately she cannot change her fate. She remarked that her life was finished, but she had to consider her children's lives, and that was why she was trying to change her husband's attitude. However she told me that quarrels and sometimes slaps are a very common result of her husband's excessive drinking habit.

A Garo woman described a case of domestic violence within the Garo community that had different causes. Sangita Mrong (aged 20), a Garo woman interviewee, said that some Garo men mistreated their wives in order to take possession of their property or to sell the property. Garo women cannot sell their property without the

consent of their *chra*, but sometimes their husbands put pressure on them and in the face of physical violence or threats they have to sell their property in order to save their marriage. This suggests that the matrilineal social system does not play a significant role due to the unequal intra-household distribution of resources and power between men and women and this places women in an unsafe place within the household power relationship, which is supported by Rahman's (2006) study in Bangladesh. Rahman (2006) argues that, due to the matrilineal system of property rights, some Garo women encounter physical and verbal abuse from their husband and in-laws in Bangladesh.

According to Mina Chakma (aged 35), one of the research participants,

> *Husbands assault their wives when they do not abide by their (the husbands') decision. Sometimes, because of economic hardship, a husband demands money or wants to borrow money from the wife's parents. If the wife cannot arrange it, she has to face verbal and physical abuse.*

Some Chakma women participants said if women in their community did not agree to marry according to their families – especially their father's - wishes, sometimes the parents would beat their daughter and forcibly arrange her marriage.  This highlights the degree of domestic violence women face in these indigenous communities, as in mainstream society, but the likelihood and the extent of domestic abuse, including physical mistreatment, are probably less than for rural Bengali women. The extent and causes of domestic violence for mainstream women were discussed in a previous literature chapter (Chapter 2), where I argued that in general Bengali Muslim rural women are more vulnerable. In terms of social exclusion and inclusion, the extent and nature of domestic violence contribute to the deliberate construction of structural barriers whereby indigenous women tend to be excluded from freedom of expression.

**Violence from outside**

In much of the existing literature (Adnan, 2004; Bleie, 2005; Rahman, 2006; Chakroborty and Ali, 2009 and others), the researchers have found that ethnic conflict and human rights violations are a common aspect of life in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, these ethnic conflicts reinforce the vulnerable position of indigenous people, especially women and children, within their communities. Indeed, the brutal

repression by the state and its security forces is considered the leading cause of poverty among indigenous societies, especially in the CHT, in Bangladesh (Adnan, 2004). Furthermore, indigenous communities are considered the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh. Chakroborty and Ali (2009) found that Bengali domination is one of the main factors in the oppression of indigenous communities. Given this, I would argue that violence from outside the community is equally relevant in identifying indigenous women's position in relation to the wider society in Bangladesh.

According to most of the Chakma women interviewees, they have to face harassment at the workplace by mainstream people, especially by Bengali employers. Some Bengali men are not comfortable about working with Chakma women. They feel that the employment of these women increases the likelihood of them losing their job. Apart from this, employers often scold these women for no good reason. It was also stated by Chakma women that they are repeatedly abused by some local leaders, and by young people (the 15-22 age group) in terms of teasing, taunting, humiliating and so on. The following case study highlights the nature of this violence and harassment from the mainstream community.

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**Case Study:** Charu Chakma (aged 18) was married at the age of 17. Charu is quite a beautiful woman. Before her marriage, she was studying in class ten. She said that she had faced so many problems in public places. Some local Bengali boys always teased her by using bad languages and *shi*s (whistling). She was disturbed about this type of attitude from local people and she informed her parents about it. But her parents were scared to talk with those people, since they knew that they could not succeed in a fight with local Bengali people, and also it would be harmful for their daughter's future and the family's reputation. Since her parents were always anxious about this problem, they decided to arrange her marriage as soon as possible. Because of these circumstances, she did not complete her Secondary School Certificate, although she said she was a brilliant student, as she always had good marks in her class. Now she is a housewife who is always busy with her household duties. She said that if she had not belonged to the Chakma Community, she might have received community support over her problem; or her parents could have taken some legal action about the local young men. Then she could have continued her studies and developed a career for the future.

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'Eve-teasing' is one of the forms of oppression suffered by women in Bangladesh. According to Mia, a BBC News Asia broadcast (11 June 2010), 14 girls and women had taken their own lives over the previous four months across the country, as a direct result of such harassment. This was reported by the Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK) human rights organisation. The above case study also described the situation of eve teasing, which is frightening for indigenous women in Bangladesh. In order to escape such circumstances, many indigenous women have to face early marriage and are withdrawn from education by their families.

However, it should be pointed out that the sexual harassment of women in the workplace and in educational institutions, in both the public and the private sectors, has been brought to public attention and combated attempts have been made to address this issue recently in Bangladesh. For example, the Government of Bangladesh has given power to assistant magistrates to prevent eve-teasing, and to administer summary justice in a mobile court where the teaser will be punished on the spot with a maximum one-year prison sentence, or will have to pay fine, or both (Daily Prothom Alo, November 10, 2010). Apart from this, the Prevention of Women's and Children's Repression Act, 2000, sets ten-year prison sentences for cases where sexual harassment or assault leads to the suicide of the victim. Recently, the Government of Bangladesh designated June 13 'Eve-teasing Protection Day'. All these state interventions against violence towards women promote the social inclusion process in Bangladesh. Similarly, the right to receive education and to work with dignity are guaranteed as fundamental rights under the Constitution of Bangladesh, though existing socio-economic challenges have effectively led to the denial of these rights to women in particular (BNWLA, 2009).

In cases of harassment, Chakma people said that the police administration often discriminated against them as compared with Bengali people, and they do not have any chance of receiving justice. Most of the time police are reluctant to file a case against Bengali people on behalf of people from the Chakma community. There was the case of Kalpona Chakma [her real name], who was kidnapped by some Bengali army officials from her home, at Lallyaghona village in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), on 19 March, 1996. This case received world headlines in 1996, due to the involvement of a local human rights organization. Following pressure from national and international organizations, the government of Bangladesh ordered a judicial

inquiry after three months, on 7 September 1996.The government set up a three-member enquiry committee to investigate the case; but the report has not yet been published. Therefore, the case remains unsolved, and in 14 years Kalpona Chakma has never been found. This case is an example that shows the discriminatory justice system that indigenous women have to deal with. And there have been many other cases where CHT women have faced various types of violence from security forces. This situation demonstrates the relative lack of power of indigenous men against men of mainstream society where indigenous men wishing to protect their womenfolk are also silenced.

Similarly, the findings reveal that existing legal support from various development organizations is inadequate, and in these cases indigenous people are unable to pursue justice by themselves, due to lack of financial means and suitable experience. In addition, there is the question of a difficult situation for a woman's family and their standing in the community. This is a case where Chakma women face violence because they are women, but most of them do not want the issue publicly discussed. In this regard, I would argue that silencing women challenges the process of social inclusion in Bangladesh.

It could also be argued that gender-related violence is reinforced by various religious, economic, political, social and legal institutions, all of which emphasize women's inferior position. Violence against women affects all spheres of women's lives: their autonomy, their productivity, and their capacity to care for themselves and their children, and their quality of life. It increases their risk of a wide range of negative health outcomes and even death. It carries huge costs for the individuals who experience it, but also for society as a whole.

## 5.4 Lifestyle and social exclusion and inclusion

A discussion of socio-cultural patterns (lifestyle) among indigenous/ tribal people is important, as it shows the extent of community participation in wider society and of social cohesion between Bengali people and indigenous people. As I have mentioned, indigenous people are recognized by their colourful and comprehensive cultural life (see Chapter 1), therefore we need to discuss the pattern of their day-to-

day lives – for example their food and drink, their style of dress and other cultural activities.

## 5.4.1 Food and drink

Indigenous people's food is just like that of Bengali people. Rice is the staple food for both communities. Apart from rice, they eat fish, meat, lentils and various types of vegetable. However, they also eat different types of wild animals, pork, and so on, which are prohibited for Bengali Muslim people. Dried fish is one of the favourite foods in both communities. For their special festivals or ceremonies they usually cook pork and arrange *chu* (in the Garo community) and 'wine' (in the Chakma community) as a special drink. These drinks are an essential part of their rituals, ceremonies and festivals. Both Chakma and Garo people make their own alcoholic drinks. One of the Chakma male interviewees said:

> *We cannot arrange any ceremonial programme without alcoholic drink....*
> *Actually, we don't like to enjoy our day in a dry situation.*

Similarly, a Garo woman interviewee named Ajanta Mankin (aged 37) said:

> *It is totally impossible to celebrate our cultural festivals without chu. Actually chu is a kind of rice beer. We keep this rice in a container with water for several days. If we keep it for days, it tastes better. It has a traditional symbolism.*

According to participants from both communities, most Bengali people, especially women, do not want to participate in indigenous people's festivals or family programmes, as they eat pork and drink alcohol. Sometimes, Bengali people refuse to eat or drink in indigenous people's homes at all. They are put off by the fact that the dishes have been used to cook wild animals or pork, and these foods are not *Halal* (religiously approved) for Muslim people. Thus, I can argue that their traditional food and drinking habits may increase the barriers that prevent indigenous people, especially women, integrating with mainstream society. Similarly, rural Muslim Bengali women may be excluded from these communities for their different religious and cultural practices, and this creates more boundaries.

## 5.4.2 Dress styles

Style of dress is another important element that marks the cultural differences between indigenous societies and Bengali society. I found that Garo people usually wear traditional dress, especially in their community events or celebrations such as Christmas and Wanna, whereas when they work in public places like schools or private offices, they usually wear formal dress like that of the Bengalis. However, most of the Garo women said that they were more comfortable with their traditional dress, and most of the time they wore traditional dress at home. It has been observed that those women who work in fields, the market and shops in their local areas usually wear traditional dress. The name of the traditional dress is *dokmanda*. It consists of a piece of cloth about 18 inches long and 14 inches wide. It is tied at the waist, which allows it to remain open. There is also traditional dress for Garo men, and this is a strip of woven cloth about six inches wide and six feet long. The picture here shows the traditional dress styles of the Garo community.



**Picture: Garo people in their traditional dress**

The dress patterns of the Chakma people are, like those of the Garo people, simple but very colourful. Chakma men wear a *dhuti* and *loongi*, and Chakma women wear a *pindhan* or petticoat of cotton and around the breast they roll up a *khadi* or *fhool Khadi,* which leaves the arms and neck exposed. Since integration with wider society, Chakma women usually cover their arms with a *baluse* when they go outside. In the past, men wore varieties of homemade short *loongi*. During the time of *jhum*–cultivation, Chakma women wear *kobai* and Chakma men wear *jhum sulum*.

Most of the women research participants said that they were very fond of ornaments made of silver, gold and ivory. The picture below shows the traditional dress of the Chakma community.



**Picture: Chakma women in their traditional dress**

The findings indicate that as most Garo women dress like mainstream people when they are in public places, and most Chaka women do not, the latter could be considered more excluded by virtue of dress. However, male members of both communities dress like mainstream men both in the domestic sphere and outside.

### 5.4.3 Dance

Dancing is an integral part of the indigenous culture in Bangladesh. These people have various kinds of folk dance to celebrate their ceremonies or festivals. During these dances, they use various types of musical instruments that they make themselves. Indigenous people celebrate different types of festivals throughout the year, following the Bengali calendar, and most of the festivals or celebrations are based on their agricultural activities. The research participants from both communities said that in their traditional ceremonies they play traditional songs written within their community. Most of the respondents said that they were very fond of music as well as of their traditional dance. No festivals or ceremonies could be imagined without their traditional songs and dances.

From the information I elicited, I would say that these people's cultural life is an important element in their mental well-being, and one in which women have the chance to enjoy their cultural life to a greater extent than is possible for rural Bengali

women. A Bengali rural woman is unlikely to have the chance to enjoy such activities, which are socially stigmatized as being part of a secular attitude to life. At the same time, indigenous people's cultural activities foster a less developed image, contributing to their exclusion, and particularly the exclusion of women, from wider society and to a view of them as minority people. In this sense, the research reveals that these people's collective cultural and individual identities may help to increase the degree of their exclusion from mainstream society. Their separate cultural and life style patterns may create barriers that prevent mainstream people from integrating with them.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter has presented findings about the personal and cultural aspects of Garo and Chakma indigenous people's lives, especially the lives of the women of these communities. To this end, 40 women (20 from each community) participated in semi-structured interviews linked to observation techniques. In particular, these reveal the socio-cultural factors that influence indigenous women, and show that they are in a more marginalized position because of the dominance of men in terms of marriage and its related factors, and because of the cultural patterns of their particular communities. The qualitative data suggest that indigenous women are excluded by structural barriers from participation in wider society, and have a marginalized position in their own communities too. However, the findings also indicate that, due to the customary rules of matrilineal society, women in these societies have a better position at the domestic level than women of other communities in Bangladesh. Sometimes, in both communities, indigenous women are prevented from choosing their marriage partner because they must show respect for their traditional social and cultural values. As a result, the proportion of love marriages is apparently lower than the proportion of arranged marriages in both communities.

As regards divorce, the data suggests that in the Chakma and Garo communities, these practices are seldom seen, even though they are approved by the State and the communities' traditional laws. Although, I agree with Guru (2009) that divorce may offer some opportunities for women to escape the horrors of dowry demands, verbal abuse and physical mistreatment, indigenous women lack the economic and other resources to become independent enough to make such decisions and so have to remain within the marital home and suffer in silence.  State intervention

aimed at preventing violence against women in Bangladesh fails to reach these women. At the same time, the findings indicate that the law enforcement agencies discriminate against indigenous people, so they are unlikely to get a favorable judgment in such situations. For this reason, these people, especially the women of these two communities, are reluctant to try and get help from the State. These attitudes exacerbate the process of self-exclusion from mainstream society (see Table 5.3).

Unfair attitudes toward women and female children in the domestic sphere also exacerbate the process of exclusion. Since this research uses multidimensional concepts of social exclusion and inclusion, it relates the personal and cultural aspects of women's lives to areas such as education, health and the economic aspects of life. I argue that social exclusion is an outcome of poverty, and is also a determinant and expression of poverty (de Hann, 1998). Therefore, in this study, social exclusion is defined as 'a group of people's [indigenous people] overlapping of objective deprivation associated with income poverty with subjective dissatisfaction with their life chances due to a lack of opportunities and choices, inadequate or limited social and political participation or integration, lack of a decision making role, lack of collective resources such as education, health, identity, and so on (Avramov, 2006).

At the same time, I have argued that differences in physical appearance (for example, Mongolian looks) (see Chapter 1, page 8), community language, dress and cultural practices also control people's active participation in mainstream society. Azim et al. (2009, p.2) state that, 'while Bangladesh still struggles to define its political and cultural identity, the women of the nation have had to forge their own struggle with issues of identity and nationhood'.

## Table 5.3- Key findings and analysis of personal & socio-cultural aspects of the Garo and Chakma communities

| DOMAINS | Sub- themes | KEY FINDINGS | | ANALYSIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | CHAKMA WOMEN | GARO WOMEN | |
| Personal & Socio-cultural<br><br>• **Marriage** | Age at marriage | 19 years (mean age) | 21 years (mean age) | Garo women are likely to marry at a later age in comparison to Chakma women. However, in Bengali society child marrige is very common in most of the rural areas of Bangladesh. |
| | Type of Marriage practice | Exogamy/endogamy (both for men and women) | Exogamy (both for men and women) | In the Chakma community both men's and women's choice of a marital partner is not controlled by community values; but the Garo men and women are affected by their exogamous marriage practice, which controls their marriage decisions. |
| | Forms of marriage | Arranged and love | Arranged and love | Almost similar to Benagali society. |
| | Marriage registration process | Informal practice; not legally registered | Legally registered by the Church | The Garo community is more progressive in such practices in comparison with the Chakma community people. However, the marriage registration process is quite common among Bengali people. |
| | Divorce | Legally permissible but rarely practiced | Legally permissible but rarely practiced | The findings indicate divorce practice is often found in both communities. |
| | Marriage of widows | Legally permissible but only exceptionally practiced by women | Legally permissible but widows less likely to remarry than widowers | |
| | Dowry / bride price | Unacceptable by their customary laws but indirectly practice in the name of gifts and bride price. | Unacceptable by their customary laws, due to their matrilineal culture and laws, but indirectly practiced in the name of gifts | The extents of these types of practice are much less than in Bengali society. At the same time, the Chakma community indirectly follows such practices more than the Garo community. |

|  | Domestic violence | Verbal and physical abuse is a common feature of some conjugal life. | Verbal abuse is a common feature of conjugal life but physical abuse is also often practiced. But they don't discuss such issues publicly. | Chakma women talked more about actual physical and verbal abuse, but Garo women have encountered both types of domestic violence but don't share or prefer to overlook such behaviour. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • **Life style** | Food and drink | Traditional food habits which are religiously prohibited by wider society. But they also commonly eat the same types of food as Bengali people | Traditional food habits which are religiously prohibited by wider society. But they commonly eat the same types of food as Bengali people | It indicates that their traditional food and drinking habits are likely to be similar, but some habits are completely unacceptable by the mainstream people. |
|  | Dress style | Traditional community dress within their community but they also wear the same type of dress as mainstream people in public place. | Traditional community dress within their community and home, but they also wear the same type of dress as mainstream people when they are in public places or offices. | In most cases, in both communities, indigenous men dressed like mainstream Bengali men both inside and outside. However, both Chakma and Garo women wear their own traditional clothes at home and within their community. But when they go to public places in mainstream society they usually wear formal Bengali dress. |
|  | Dance & Song | Traditional community or folk dances and song are performed within their community in their ceremonies and festivals. | Traditional community or folk dances and song are performed within their community in their ceremonies and festivals. | Their cultural life can give them individual or community well-being but sometimes this type of cultural practice creates barriers that prevent mainstream people and indigenous people integrating in Bangladesh. |

The findings (see Table 5.3) indicate that indigenous women, especially in a patriarchal community (the Chakma community), have personal life choices and opportunities that are likely to be controlled by the dominant patriarchal culture. Even women in a matrilineal society (the Garo community) do not control their personal life, as their *chra* (maternal uncle) usually takes all the major decisions. However, in recent years, the Government of Bangladesh has amended and promulgated several Acts and Ordinances in an effort to safeguard women's rights on marriage and divorce. This situation is similar across the world, with domestic relations often directly or indirectly controlled by male members of communities. As a result, the theoretical approach (capability approach) of this research has led to the questioning of whether indigenous women can convert their resources into valuable achievements (such as well-being), and whether indigenous women have the capacity to tackle their disadvantaged position in order to promote the process of social inclusion both within their own communities and in wider society. In this study, social inclusion is defined as, 'The removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to public capital and services, and development opportunities' (Bennett, 2002 and DFID/World Bank 2005, 5). Overall, in this chapter, my argument has drawn attention to the fact that that indigenous life is likely to be influenced by the mainstream patriarchal society and by the process of modernization in Bangladesh. And these women are therefore likely to be excluded from social cohesion and from integrating into the dominant Bengali society.

Finally, I would like to argue that the institutional barriers that these women face could be removed by effective state intervention and by the work of development agencies, for example, in providing equal educational opportunities and facilities for integration with mainstream society etc. This would lead to women being treated more equally at a domestic level and consequently to them functioning (Sen, 1993) in a way that would lead to their well-being. Although, in most cases such activities are likely to be ignored due to social norms and practice and create gender gap in domestic and wider societal level in Bangladesh.

# Education, health and identity as a process of social exclusion/inclusion

## 6.1 Introduction

It is arguable which are the key drivers of the social exclusion that afflicts indigenous people, especially the women, of the Chakma and Garo communities. As I have argued, the process of social exclusion is multi-dimensional and the concept of social exclusion is closely related to the notion of 'relative deprivation' (de Hann, 1999); but it also explains the causal as well as the constitutive processes of poverty and deprivation (Sen, 2000). It is in this context that, in this chapter, I shall discuss how Chakma and Garo indigenous people, especially the women of these communities, are excluded from education, health and having an identity of their own. It might be argued that problems of education and health are more linked with the financial incapacity of these particular groups than with a question of identity. But this chapter will highlight how these three issues challenge the process of social inclusion against a background of economic difficulties. It will look at the social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially the women, from education opportunities and health facilities along with the ineffectiveness of state policies that might challenge the processes of exclusion. It will also discuss the question of discrimination in the area of identity and how this explains the process of cultural devaluation (Kabeer, 2008). For I would like to argue that differences in ethnic identity create an unequal relationship between Bengalis and the indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

This reflects my argument, in line with Gore et al. (1995, p.31-33), that, 'There are interrelationships between the different dimensions of social exclusion. Additionally, social exclusion appears to occur within all economies and societies, but manifests itself in different forms, with different intensities and with different degrees of salience to members of society or their representatives'. Avramov (2006, p.14) argues that, 'Social exclusion is a condition of deprivation that is manifested through the generalised disadvantages facing individuals and social groups due to the accumulation of social handicaps'. On the other hand, he finds that, 'Social inclusion is the process of opportunity enhancement for building or re-establishing social bonds by facilitating the access of all citizens to social activity, income, public

institutions, social protection and programs and services for assistance and care' (Avramov, 2002, pp. 26-7).

Therefore, along with the notion of financial incapacity, this research looks at why the issues of education, health and identity are important for this thesis. In this perspective, I would like to argue that these issues are explicitly linked with the process of human development. Therefore, the World Bank addressed these issues (education and health) in its millennium development goals (MDGs) for every country. As I have argued, social exclusion is both a relational (social deprivation) and distributional (material resources) concept; thus the analysis of education, health and identity will explore social deprivation in relation to unequal education and health opportunities as well as problems of identity. At the same time, these issues create obstacles to accessing material resources for human development, as will be explained in the following analysis.

To pursue this question, 40 indigenous women (20 from each community) and 10 indigenous men (five from each community) were interviewed using a schedule of semi-structured interview questions. This supports my epistemological position, which is based on an interpretive approach where the research findings are explicitly drawn from the participants' discussion and interpretation of the research questions. At the same time, drawing on an inductive approach, participants' responses to semi-structured interviews show individuals' (especially individual women's) experiences of particular issues that may challenge the inclusionary process in Bangladesh. It is in this context that this chapter analyses the three major themes of education, health and identity (See Diagram 6.1). The last of these themes, that of identity, includes the notions of individual identity and collective identity, which will be briefly described in the analysis.

**Figure 6.1: A thematic diagram of education, health and identity as contributory factors in the processes of social exclusion and inclusion**
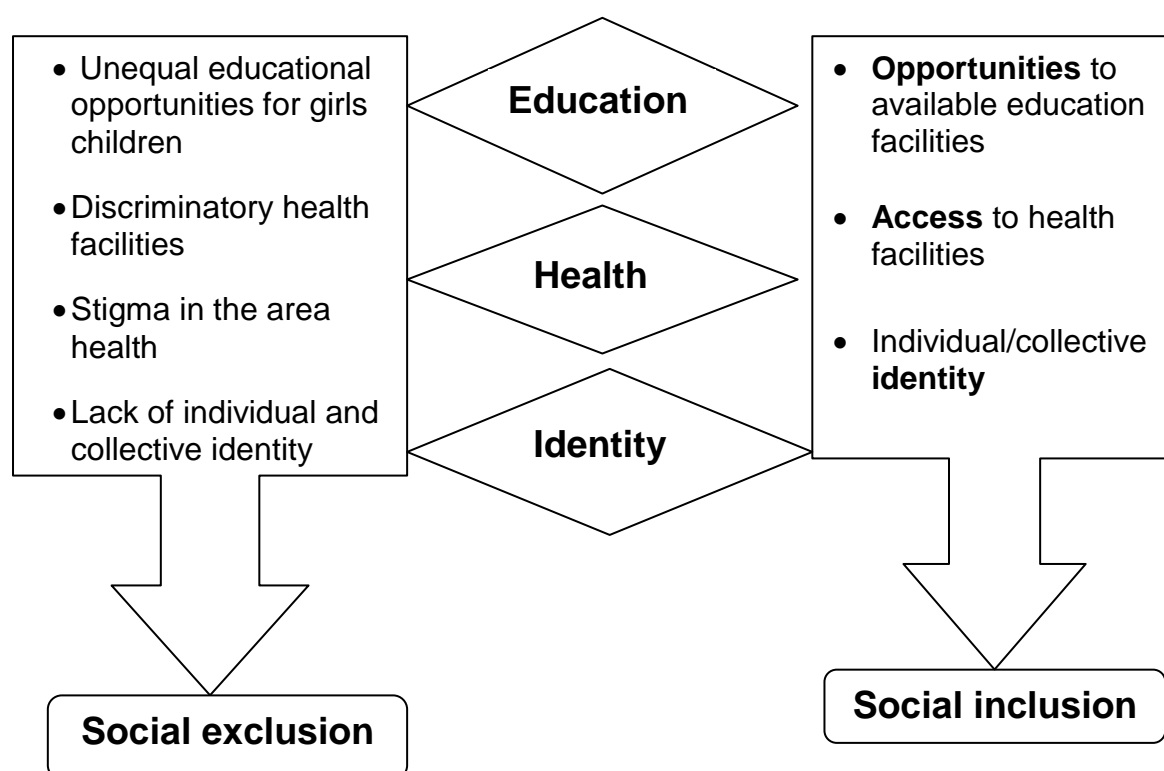


The above diagram shows that, due to unequal educational opportunities, women tend to fall into the excluded group. Additionally, health services that discriminate against indigenous people, especially women, challenge the health aspect of the inclusionary process in Bangladesh. And a lack of individual and collective identity creates obstacles to integration with mainstream people and indicates discrimination at the level of basic human rights toward indigenous people in Bangladesh. All these arguments are briefly discussed in this chapter.

## 6.2 Education

Education is one of the key elements in the development and well-being of indigenous people in Bangladesh. Sayed et al. (2007), in their study for the Department for International Development (DFID), state that, 'Educational exclusion is a facet of social exclusion and manifests itself in a spectrum of social and psychological inequities. Extreme educational exclusion arises when individuals and groups find themselves systematically excluded from rights and entitlements which should be theirs as a result of their membership of a society and includes denial of

resources and facilities'.   This means that an examination of the process of social exclusion of indigenous people in Bangladesh will identify barriers to education in these people's individual experiences and perceptions. However, the process of social inclusion particularly challenges the notion of 'equal educational opportunity'. Significantly, it has challenged it with regard to the financial burdens of households and the overall poverty situation in Bangladesh. In this context, Sparkes (1999) said, 'A review of research evidence suggests that low levels of educational attainment are crucial in generating and sustaining social exclusion'. Similarly,  studies by Clisby et al., (2007, p.34) revealed that 'the socio-cultural and structural gender practices in education systems still contribute to women facing significant disadvantage across public and private spheres in 21st century Britain'.

In this research, the importance of girls' education has increased with the dynamics of social exclusion and inclusion. Therefore, we need to look around at how the education system and individual perceptions of the benefits of education play important roles in overcoming the marginalized position of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

Halim (2005/2002) highlight the fact that in indigenous areas no initiatives have been taken to teach the children in their mother tongue, which discourages indigenous children from education. In addition, the participants in the present research describe the following reasons as barriers to education:

- poverty or financial incapacity

  - distance from a school

  - lack of transportation

  - inadequate schools

  - insecurity of girls having to attend school by crossing lonely hills

  - the medium of education (Bangla)

- unequal facilities in comparison to Bengali society. For example: most of the children, especially girls, in mainstream society go to school to receive food and stipends as they are not, apparently, getting this benefit in any other way.

In general, most indigenous people, especially women, are not aware of the benefit and importance of education (BBS, 2007; BRAC, 1999). The literacy rate is very low in almost all indigenous communities in CHT in Bangladesh (see Chapter 2). The findings reveal that the literacy rate at primary and secondary level is better for Garo women than for Chakma women. The following table (Table 6.1) illustrates the level of education of Chakma and Garo indigenous women.

**Table: 6.1 Education levels of the Chakma and Garo participants**

| Level of education | No. of respondents (Chakma) | No. of respondents (Garo) |
|---|---|---|
| Illiterate | 4 | 3 |
| Primary | 8 | 5 |
| Lower secondary | 4 | 6 |
| Secondary (SSC) | 2 | 1 |
| Higher secondary (HSC) | 1 | 3 |
| Graduate+ | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **20** | **20** |

**Source: Field work**

The table shows that the majority of the participants from both communities have completed less than a secondary level of education. Most of the respondents have gained a primary to lower secondary level of education, which means the numbers of women who have received higher education are very small in both communities. It also highlights the fact the female education rate in both communities gradually decreases up through secondary level. This finding supports the report of the Population Census of Bangladesh (2001). According to the Population Census of Bangladesh (2001), the  literacy rate of indigenous women is far lower than that of Bengali women, though the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2001) found that the literacy rate of the Chakma and Garo communities is 89 percent and 94 percent (at primary level) respectively. Rahman (2006, p. 211) suggests that 'there are some missionary schools in areas where there are concentrations of Garo people and these encourage local Garo people to attend their school'. This point highlights that Garo women are more progressive in comparison to Chakma women. However, the fact is that the matrilineal character of their society supports Garo women in being

more progressive in terms of education than other indigenous women in Bangladesh. In this context, Shamoli Laksham, a Garo woman aged 50, stated that:

*When I was young I did not receive enough education because of inadequate local schools. In the past, if we wanted to go to school then we needed to walk more than five miles from our village, but now we have a government primary school, BRAC schools, and a Christian missionary school within a mile of our homes. In the past, our parents were scared to send us to school, although we had a positive intention that we should become educated.*

Another participant from Chakma community stated that:

*Our parents prefer to educate their male children, as male members of the family are considered the major support for every family, especially for our parents in old age. In addition, the head of household position belongs to the eldest male child of every family within our community. Unfortunately, some girls are not allowed to get religious education (Shromon) either, and so parents want male children. Sometimes widows and separated/abandoned women have to come back to their parental home and work hard for their livelihoods. When I was 17 years old, my parents arranged my marriage; but I wanted to continue my studies. My father told me a daughter needed to know how to cook and take care of her family. Therefore, I didn't need to achieve a higher degree. Even now, I feel I am not counted as a family member within my parental home. They often consider me an 'outsider' since my marriage'* (Charu Chakma, aged 18).

However, most of the participants (Chakma and Garo women) claimed that they preferred to give equal attention to the education of their boys and that of their girls. Some Garo women agreed that the matrilineal system influenced their thoughts about the need for education. Most of the parents from both communities believed that if they educated their daughters, they would be able look after their 'family property' and 'family values'. In this situation, one of the Garo research participants named Mausomi Drong (aged 47) said:

*Since the death of my husband, I have had to work hard to provide enough education for my children. I have one daughter and two sons. Unfortunately, I do not have enough education to get a better job. I have realized that if I could*

*complete my higher secondary education, then I could have a job in the local missionary offices.*

Furthermore, in comparison with the Garo community, the Chakma community generally has a higher level of education. This situation was clarified by one of the government public relations officers (Parbotto Zila Parishad, Rangamati). He said:

*Most of the children, especially the girls, of indigenous communities are growing up uneducated. However, in comparison to the other eleven indigenous communities of Parbotto Zila Parishad, the education rate is quite high among the Chakma community'.*

However, the annual report of CARITAS Bangladesh (2008-2009) pointed out that the drop-out rate for girl children was very high in the Chakma community. Additionally, the report revealed that children did not get the opportunity to study in their own language at schools. Thus, they were not interested in going to school, due to the lack of written books in their tribal language/dialect.

In this situation, a Garo woman participant named Amrita Laxsham, who is a school teacher, said:

*The literacy rate has been increasing day-by-day among our community since there have been Christian missionary activities like missionary hostels for girls and boys, stipends for low income people, etc. However, insufficient local schools and the long distance from home are the major barriers to going to school, especially for girls.*

From this perspective, I would like to point out another important issue which is indirectly related to educational exclusion. Indigenous women are the main workers in families, thus when they work in the field they usually pass their domestic responsibilities to their girl children. Therefore, the girl children cannot gain access to even basic education. This is one of the important causes of girl children in Bangladesh dropping out of school. The evidence indicates that education is usually seen as a way of increasing work opportunities; but in this case, I can argue work is a barrier to gaining education for indigenous girls. According to UNESCO (2007), the figure of 77 million children out of school, of which 43 million are girls, includes many marginalized and excluded groups. This means there is a need to draw policy makers' attention to the need for girls' education, especially that of girls, who are

considered part of the marginalized population in developing countries, like the indigenous girls children in Bangladesh.

In the United Kingdom, data from the National Child Development Study (Hobcraft, 1998 and Sparkes, 1999) suggest that individuals who leave school with low levels of educational attainment are at a higher risk of experiencing social exclusion as adults, with those who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills at particular risk. 'A stronger version of the equal opportunities approach suggested that some degree of compensation for inherited disadvantage might be required to enable all children to benefit from education' (Riddell, 2009, p.4). For this reason, the theoretical approach ('capability approach' according to Sen, 1985) on which this research is based draws attention to the concept of 'equal opportunities', where social inclusion challenges the structural and cultural barriers faced by indigenous women in Bangladesh.

In these circumstances, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) people, especially Chakma people, have been asking the government of Bangladesh to implement provisions to safeguard their language, culture, heritage and identity, although the Constitution of Bangladesh does not clearly recognize the plurality of ethnicity and language. The Bengali Constitution places the Bengali language at the centre of Bangladeshi nationalism. Thus, inequalities among indigenous people, especially girl children, within mainstream society minimize the potential of girls to develop their self-esteem and their capacity for individual and communal well-being. Therefore, the Government has to ensure equal opportunities and universal enrolment in education for all children in Bangladesh. At the same time, the strategy of 'self-exclusion' of indigenous people, especially women, means that they opt out of Bengali society in order to preserve their way of life, language etc. Thus, lack of civic integration and social cohesion in mainstream society may represent a desire to avoid domination by Bengali people of their community and individual affairs.

## 6.3 Health

In the United Kingdom, the importance of health has been increasingly recognised in policy debates since the early 1980s. The health of individuals and communities is closely linked to, and affected by, social and economic deprivation (Black et al., 1980/1988 and Whitehead, 1987). In developing countries, 'Social exclusion is manifested by marginality and marginalization' (Bhalla, 1999, p.133) where

marginalization encompasses a low level of income, social deprivation and lack of participation in mainstream society. In this research, health is discussed in the context of exclusionary services and practices affecting indigenous people in Bangladesh. This section focuses on the experiences of indigenous women's unequal access to health care facilities and practices in terms of poor health conditions and the stigmatization of unhealthy behaviours or lifestyles in Bangladesh.

The health situation of CHT people is poor, especially in Parbotto Zila Parisahd (Rangamati, Bandorbon and Khagrachari districts). Participants described how difficult it is for them to communicate with local district hospitals, due to long distances and rough, hilly paths. Apart from this, there are no affordable transport facilities for the indigenous areas in Bangladesh. In this situation, people have to walk to get treatment in local government hospitals. Sometimes patients have to be carried to hospitals on a litter. Private/NGO level health services are also very inadequate in indigenous areas. However, there are health facilities available, such as district hospitals, the Upazila Health Complex, and NGO clinics (like BRAC, UNDP, and World Vision etc.) According to Bindu Chakma (aged 35):

> *It is not easy for us to receive government health services, as most of the time doctors and health workers are absent from their work stations. We are neglected by local hospital staff, and that is why we hesitate to visit these facilities. Sometimes we have to pay extra money, like a bribe, to an administrative person or personal assistant to get an earlier appointment with a senior doctor or practitioner.*

The research participants stated that government officials and service providers (doctors, managers, workers, and teachers) were not friendly or cooperative to indigenous people. In these circumstances, they did not receive equal health services from health centres. These centres are likely to favour Bengali people when it comes to providing services in hospitals. As a result, poor people, especially indigenous women, have to depend on traditional healers (*ojha*, *boidyo*) and *quaks* and *kabiraj,* and over the years their health may deteriorate.

For this reason, mortality and morbidity rates are high in both communities in comparison to Bengali society. In fact, safe maternity services are almost absent, and most deliveries take place at home either with the help of elderly female

relatives or local untrained traditional birth attendants (TBA). In most cases, pregnant mothers are not given special/additional food in their families, because they believe it will cause ill health for the mother and the child. As a result, mothers as well as new born babies suffer from malnutrition and other health problems. Pregnant women do not receive any pre- or post- natal care, due to lack of awareness, long distances and the cost involved. Very few women receive TT (Tetanus Toxoid) injections prior to or even during pregnancy. Those women who are educated and live in or near to *sadar* (towns) are more likely to receive TT injections prior to or during pregnancy. Laboni Mangsang (aged 47) said:

> *Generally, most of the deliveries take place at home with the help of dai maa (non-professional midwives). Only in an emergency are women taken to the local clinic or thana health complex for their delivery.*

In the previous section, we saw that the female literacy rate is likely to be lower in both communities. Therefore, superstitions are common among indigenous people, especially women, in Bangladesh.  This is reflected in the following statements:

According to a Chakma woman,

> *We do not give breast milk to our lactating babies in any places where cats or dogs have died previously, because this will cause our babies to have asthma* (Nandita Chakma, aged 48).

According to a Garo woman participant:

> *We are not allowed to eat hilsha fish (the national fish of Bangladesh), pumpkin, watermelon, etc during pregnancy, because we believe that our children will be born resembling these items; and also, eating pineapple sometimes causes miscarriages* (Rachana Sangma, aged 36).

From the above findings, I would like to argue that indigenous women are traditionally subject to stigma or sometimes superstitious due to lack of education and other structural barriers , and thus they are failing to receive health protection, especially on maternal  service, from the state – a failure which can be the result of self-exclusion in Bangladesh. Apart from this, indigenous women work very hard to survive within their families. This is illustrated in the next chapter with regard to the economic processes of social exclusion and inclusion. Even during pregnancy, women have to collect water and cooking wood from the forests – that is to continue

what they consider their daily lifestyle. They do not realize that a woman needs to take additional food and care during the pre-natal and post-natal periods.

Concomitantly, the practice of contraception is almost absent, due to the lack of awareness about family planning methods, although few participants in either community said that their husbands were not interested in using any family planning method individually. In this case, some indigenous women used oral contraceptives.

Most of the children are immunized with the first dose of three vaccines by field staff of the Health Department. But many of them do not receive the booster doses. Both mothers and children suffer from anemia and malnutrition (CARITAS, 2009).

Additionally, the following causes are also found for these people's unhealthy lifestyles:

- lack of proper sanitation

- inadequate access to pure drinking water

- mono-cultural food (*jhum* cultivation)

- lack of awareness or stigmatization.

From the above analysis, we can argue that poor health conditions and unhealthy life styles challenge the inclusiveness of a healthy society. They also impact on the country's productivity and economic development. The WHO Macroeconomic Commission on Health estimates that a 10 per cent increase in life expectancy leads to an additional increase of 0.3-0.4 percentage points in the annual per capita income. As a result, according to the World Bank (2004), a typical high-income country (US$ 29,516 per capita income) with an average life expectancy of 78 years has a 1.6 per cent higher annual growth rate than a typical low-income country (US$ 575 per capita income) with an average life expectancy of 46 years. This means that poor health conditions promote the barriers to individual and national well-being. Therefore, in recent years, health issues have been a matter of concern in policy debates in developed and developing nations. It can be argued that financial incapacity may influence people's ability to cope with unhealthy life styles which are directly linked to the poverty situation. From this perspective, the WHO (2000, p.1) estimates that, 'Every year more than 150 million individuals or 44 million households face catastrophic health expenditure, as a direct result of health

problems, and about 25 million households, or more than 100 million individuals are pushed into poverty by the need to pay for services'.

This research highlights the process of self-exclusion with regard to the stigmatization of indigenous women and the taboos which affect their vulnerable position within their households. In particular, indigenous women are cut off and controlled not only by their traditional practices but also by the structural barriers such as distance, limited transport and unavailability of professional doctors, financial inabilities etc. where they are likely to have a chance to receive available health care services from the state. Thus, poor health, maternal mortality, and women's unnatural death have all made women more vulnerable than men in Bangladesh (Islam and Sultana, 2006).

## 6.4 Identity

In this research, an analysis of the concept of identity is relevant, as it deepens our knowledge about the position of women within patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. In this respect, Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) argued that women's identity embody by cross collectivity boarders and territorial boundaries where women are used to mark such boundaries by men and mythical imagination of other members of society.  Therefore, women may often affect a paradoxical relationship in terms of ethnicity, class, gender and other social divisions. In this research, the ethnic boundaries demonstrate with indigenous people's physical and spatial mobility, physical resemblance and geographical existence in Bangladesh. For example, the Garo people are not always called 'Garos' by people outside the community. Different terminologies have been used to describe their identity, and I have already mentioned these in my previous, methodological chapter (see Chapter 4, page 95).

The notion of identity is a key element of any research study of an ethnic minority, where it works as a significant boundary marker between different communities (Bal, 2000).  Branscombe et al. (1999) found that high identifiers respond to any threat to their collective or group by, among other things, increasing their identification with it; while low identifiers further distance themselves from the group when it is threatened. In this research,

Therefore, I would argue that different ethnic identification may have created discord and an unequal relationship between the Bengali and indigenous communities in Bangladesh. In the same way, an unequal kinship structure may have established gender segregation at indigenous women's intra-household level or in the 'power and control' relationship at their domestic and community levels. In the Chakma community, when a child born he or she is seen as belonging to their father's clan. One of the Chakma women stated that the lineage of male children remains unchanged in all circumstances, though girls take their husband's clan name after marriage. On the other hand, in the Garo community, every Garo belongs to a 'lineage', that is a kinship group all the members of which share the same family name. As I have discussed, Garo society is matrilineal, so the lineage name comes from the mother's side.

However, in this thesis, the identity theme will be articulated in connection with the notions of both individual identity and collective identity (Adapted from Elizabeth Sullivan, 2002), which will be briefly described in the following part of the analysis.

### 6.3.1 Collective Identity

Collective or group identity is a key element of citizenship: the withholding or downgrading of citizenship is a powerful tool for social exclusion, marginalization and oppression (Alcock et al., 2002; Weeks, 2003); and in the classic theory of citizenship, as argued by Marshall, the conferring or extending of citizen status is a mechanism for social inclusion (Concannon, 2007). In this research, however, I am not going to focus on the idea of citizenship, although this is a vital issue for social exclusion or inclusion. This research is concerned with the idea of gender and social exclusion or inclusion, and the notion of citizenship is discussed as part of the idea of indigenous people's collective identity. In this sense, lack of citizenship or lack of self-determination excludes indigenous women from benefiting from improvements in the human rights situation in Bangladesh. As we know, the right to a sense of identity is a fundamental principle in international law, with the Charter of the United Nations and the International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights noting that, 'All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of this right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (Article 1, Paragraph 1). However, I would argue that the notion of 'peoples' is not clearly defined by this law, and perhaps it should be expressed as

people collectively or as individual human beings. For I would argue that if collective identity cannot be assured by the state, then how can indigenous women establish their individual identity or gender equality in Bangladesh? According to a Garo research participant:

> *We are called by different names, such as Tribals, Mandi, Adibashi, Indigenous People, Upojati, Pahari, Jhumma, Garo etc. Sometimes some Bengali people call us names like 'mandi jat' or 'pahari jat' or 'nak boucha' (flat nose). We know that we do not resemble the Bangladeshi people, we look like Mongoloid people. However it is not our fault. Every human being was made by God.... So why are we humiliated by them?* (Chaitali Rechil, aged 34)

It may be that indigenous people have different social identities because of their distinct physical looks (see the picture in the Appendix 4). Rose (1976, p.19) argues that, 'Ethnic identity reflects three criteria – race, religion and nationality – that reinforce one another to provide a conception of people hood that is at once racial, religious and national'. It is therefore my opinion that we need to know about our research subjects' local collective or group identification, and how this interacts with the processes of exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

**Tribe/Tribal**

According to Bal (2000) 'Tribe' is an English word which was first introduced in Bengal by British colonial administrators and foreign anthropologists. Since then the word has become more or less incorporated into the Bengali language (Bal, 2000, p.3-4). The organizing of ethnic groups into tribes is a physical or regional stratification, where the inhabitants of a certain area or region have distinct, and in terms of this organisation, isolating features such as physical appearance, religion, caste, and so on. It is in this context that the words 'ethnicity' and 'tribe' are applied to the different communities and caste groups in Bangladesh.

The British and colonial administrators used these words to denote a caste or group, but not to identify them as aboriginal, isolated, simple, underdeveloped, local, and so on. However, for local people now, 'tribal' means those people who live in isolated places like hills and forests. Now the term is widely used by the majority of people to identify the indigenous people of Bangladesh.

According to Rivers (1932, p.465), 'Tribe means a social group of a simple kind, members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government and act together for such common purposes as warfare'. The term tribal has been coined at times to describe anyone who practices slash-and-burn cultivation or hunting and gathering, regardless of their culture or for how long they have been doing this (Bates, 1995, p.107).

**Indigenous peoples**

The word 'indigenous' has been become familiar since the observation of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993. The word has taken on a significant meaning for these peoples, in the sense that it transcends local, national or international boundaries and connects them through assumptions about similar beliefs and identities.

According to the United Nations' working definition coined by Jose Martinez Cobo (1986), 'Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having an historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

 'Indigenous peoples have a collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including the right to identify themselves as indigenous and to be recognized as such.' (UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 1997; Article 8)

However, mainstream people in Bangladesh use the term 'indigenous people' to mean those who have a different physical appearance which resembles the appearance of Chinese, Burmese or Mongoloid people.

**Aborigines**

The word 'aborigine' was first introduced by the British administrators during the colonial period. It has been widely used in both Bengali and English literatures. The British used the term to distinguish so-called ancient peoples from 'modern Indians',

with the underlying assumption that aborigines belonged to older, less advanced strata of the population that had somehow failed to keep up with progress (Bal, 2000). The word is mostly linked to discussion of historical progression. The aborigines are, to be more precise, a political group, and then a social group. The term 'indigenous people' overlaps with the idea of aborigines in that it denotes early settlements of peoples who have long-established rights to land and other resources flowing from that early settlement (Bal, 2000).

**Pahari**

Generally Bangladeshi people have identified indigenous people as *Pahari*, which is a demeaning term that puts them in a large, denigrated class rather than seeing them as a nation. People who dwell in the mountains and hills are called *Pahari*. It has been argued that the name was originally given by lowlanders to their hill-dwelling neighbours in the Rajmohal Hill area in Bihar (Gomes, 1988). However, the mountain dwellers used the name *Pahana* to distinguish themselves from the people of the plains. These people had a common lifestyle and similar life experiences.

**Jhumma**

*Jhum* cultivation is a specific crop production system. The *Jhummas*, the practitioners of *jhum* cultivation, are mostly the inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the surrounding hilly areas. In the 1970s, *Jhumma* was used by the regional political party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Jana Sanghati Samiti (JSS), to refer all inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bal, 2000). These people live by particular methods of cultivation in the hills and mountains. However, the name indicates a shared experience not only of cultivation but also of marginalisation, exploitation, polarization and agitation for social equality and solidarity. It embraces groups of various linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Schendel, 1992).

**Adivasi**

*Adivasi* is a common term in both Bengali and English which gained popularity in pre-independence India and continued to be used in India after 1947. It probably originated in the Chota Nagpur region in Bihar in the 1930s and was popularized at a wider level in the 1940s (Haridman, 1995). A*divasi* was coined from the Sanskrit *adi* (meaning 'beginning' or 'of earliest times') and *vasi* (meaning 'residents of'), and is a

close translation of 'aborigine'. It also incorporates the idea that the *adivasi* are the original inhabitants of South Asia (Ghueye, 1963). Hardiman (1995) prefers *adivasi* to 'tribe' because the term relates to a particular historical development which generated a shared spirit of resistance, a consciousness of the *Adivasi* against the outsider.

**Mandi**

The word *mandi* literally means 'man' or 'human being'. The name *Mandi* has two meanings: *Achick Mandi* (the Man of the Hills*)* and *Lamdani Mandi* (the Man of the Plains). The origin of the word *mandi* can only be conjectured and has become part of the mythology of the communities that use it. Various opinions suggest that the word is derived from *Gura Mandai.* Playfair (1909) identified the word *mandi* as a contraction of *man-in-de*, which means son of man, though there is no evidence of this. Garo epic lore which has come down to the present community does not account for the origins of the name Garo. However, there are plenty of instances of the name *Mandi* or *Mandai.* The Garos' forefathers failed to pass on any verbal traditions to their descendents concerning the present word Garo. The only reasonable reason for this is that the word had no existence before recent times (Haque, 2006).

Burling (1997) states that the name *Mandi* derives from a combination of two words, *achick* and *mandi* where *achick* means 'hill' and *mandi means* 'people'. So *Achick Mandi* are 'the people of the hill'. However, the use of the word in the case of Bangladesh would be erroneous, because the north-eastern part of Bangladesh where the Garos live is not hilly, and the field work found that they call themselves *Achick.* The other etymology of the word *achick* suggests that *a* is for 'soil' and *chick* is for 'bite'. So *Achick Mandi* means 'the people who bite the soil'. This meaning offers a glorious link with the past, signifying the people's courageousness and their love for the land where they have lived since time immemorial.

Sanjeeb Drong, Secretary of the Bangladesh Adibashi Forum and a famous leader of the Garo community, argues that identifying Garo people in Bangladesh is itself a problematic issue. There are so many notions that have been used to refer to these people by the Bengali community and also by local and international development agencies.

According to the Garo research participants, they identify themselves as *Mandis*, although in wider society and in other ethnic communities in Bangladesh, they are known as Garos. Garo people also consider themselves in a *jat* which is distinct from Bengalis, Chakmas and other ethnic communities in Bangladesh (Burling, 1997, 165). The participants themselves said that they were affiliated to different groups such as the *Abeng*, *Chibak*, *Attong*, *Megham* and so on, and all the groups are also known in relation to their geographical location.

In the past, Chakmas were divided into three clans – the Chakma, the *Tanchangya* and the *Doinnak* (Lewin, 1869), although most of respondents argued that Tanchangya and Doinnak are not their clan name. These communities changed their community names following the Pegu expedition with Chakma Raja in 1600. After the mission, some Tanchangya and Doinnak people started describing themselves as Chakmas. However, the research participants identified that there are many groups (*gojha*) in Chakma society. All groups consist of several *gutthis* (clans).

According to the research participants, the chief of Chakma society is called the *Chakma Raja* and this is also recorded in other studies (for example, Sattar, 1971; Chakma, 2007). This chief's decision and opinion is considered the final word to settle any community affairs among the Chakma people. In the past, the *Chakma Raja* used to conduct his state affairs with the help of those who held the posts of *Dhabeng*, *Chege* and *Khijha* (lead man of a group). It is likely that in the past, Chakma society was divided into several groups (*gojha* or *khija*) (Chakma, 2007, p.53).

From the above discussion of collective identity, I would argue that the problem of group or collective identity leads to these people, especially the indigenous women and children, occupying a position of exclusion in Bangladesh. The recognition of ethnic group or collective identity is a crucial mechanism for the development of the human rights situation in Bangladesh. It is an important contributory factor to preventing and resolving conflicts between Bengali and indigenous communities.

### 6.3.2 Individual identity

Individual identity reflects biological and ancestral identity. In this research, individual identity is seen as linked to ancestral identity, which is basically based on indigenous women's traditional kinship system. As Sharma (1980) argues, the kinship system

explains the concrete rights and obligations of, and the crucial distinction made between, women as *affine* (primarily wives, daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law, etc) and women as *consanguine* (sisters, daughters, etc). This means that kinship affiliation influences women's social identity, which is a dynamic factor of social exclusion in Bangladesh.

I would like to argue that the cultural construction of gender separation within their kinship structure supports men's position to a greater extent than it does women's. This means that men have a greater control over women in terms of their social position in Bangladesh. This argument will be briefly discussed in the next chapter in terms of indigenous women's participation in decision-making.

Bal (2000) argues that nowadays kinship plays a less important role, now that these people have begun choosing their own life partner within their community. Such choices are still bounded by the rules that a Garo should always marry a Garo and that a Garo should never marry someone from their own *machong* (Bal, 2000, p.95). Thus, Bal argues that the matrilineal kinship organization gives a relatively free and equal position to Garo women, especially in comparison to Chakma and Bengali women. This means that the exogamous matrilineal kinship group plays an inalterable role within their community life. However, it has been observed that the Chakma clans are male-dominated or patriarchal. The names of the Chakma clans derive from the names of animals, trees and localities. This system, a result of belief in totems, is widely current throughout the tribal world (Sattar, 1971).

From the above analysis, I argue that these women's clan or kinship affiliations interact with their domestic social status, while their community identity reflects their position in wider society. This means, the indigenous men and women's social boundaries correspondence with individual community ideology which women place in legitimised position on the individual level. Therefore, sometimes indigenous women are devalued in terms of their individual identity in the name of their traditional kinship system and they are excluded from integration into their family by structural barriers at their intra-household level.

## 6.5 Summary

This chapter has presented findings about discrimination in education, health and identity that affect indigenous people, especially Chakma and Garo women, in

Bangladesh. The analysis has been accomplished using the following definition of social exclusion:

> *Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household* (DFID, 2005, p.3).

Using this definition, it is obvious that education, health and identity are relevant to an analysis of social exclusion and inclusion, as Blackburn has argued that health exclusion and poverty are not experienced uniformly by individuals and social groups or across localities (Blackburn, 1999, p.38). Rather, education barriers, ill health and lack of individual identity impact on the well-being of individuals and different communities and this increases long-term poverty in Bangladesh (See Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2 Key findings and analysis of education, health and identity aspects of the Garo and Chakma communities**

| | | KEY FINDINGS | | ANALYSIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DOMAINS** | **Sub-themes** | **CHAKMA WOMEN** | **GARO WOMEN** | |
| Education | Level of education | • Unequal educational opportunities for girls.<br><br>• Most of the participants completed their primary education. | • Most of the participants claim that they paid equal attention to the education of their boys and that of their girls.<br><br>• Most of participants completed their primary education. | The female education rate in both communities gradually decreases up through secondary level due to poverty or financial incapacity, lack of transportation, inadequate schools etc. The data also suggest that the matrilineal character of their society supports Garo women in being more progressive in terms of education than other indigenous women in Bangladesh. |
| Health | Health facilities | • Lack of access to available heath services.<br><br>• Stigmatized or likely to depend on | • Lack of access to available heath services<br><br>• Stigmatized or likely to depend on traditional healers (*ojha*, *boidyo*) and | The poor health conditions and traditional health care practices of both communities challenge the inclusiveness of a healthy society. The findings revealed that most of the indigenous women participants are likely to be stigmatized because of their traditional beliefs and practices, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | traditional healers (*ojha*, *boidyo*) and *quaks* and *kabira.* | *quaks* and *kabira.* | which prevent them from practising a modern/scientific healthy life style which is almost similar to Benagali rural society in Bangladesh. |
| Identity | Collective identity | There are many notions such as tribe, *Adivashi and* indigenous etc. have been used to refer to Chakma people to define their collective identification. | There are many notions such as tribe, *Adivashi,* indigenous and *Mandi* etc. have been used to define their collective identification. | The quality of indigenous women's personal identity at a domestic level produces low self-esteem, which puts them into a marginalized position at a domestic level. In a similar way, the lack of collective human rights for indigenous people challenges the implementation of human rights in Bangladesh. |
| | Individual identity | Chakma women individual identity likely to determine by the practice of patriarchal culture. | Garo people's clan or kinship affiliations interact with their domestic social status in order to practice the exogamous marriage culture. | This evidence demonstrates with Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) argument about cultural and national 'mythical boundaries' where they argued that women's collective identity are often constructed by symbolic boarder guard of the collectivity and their individual boundaries used to marks as the way out from traditional gender roles in the society where a woman lives |

In the first section of this chapter, I identified the educational barriers experienced by indigenous women in Bangladesh. The evidence suggests that unequal educational opportunities negatively affect the process of social inclusion. The educational difficulties encountered by women in Bangladesh challenge their overall well-being. Women are unlikely to gain the significant qualifications and training that would improve their future minimum employability status. Recent global assessments of education have noted that rural children, low-income children, and children from ethnic minorities are at risk (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007).Therefore, the United Nations' millennium development goals, first enunciated in 2000, emphasize reducing gender gaps in schooling that disadvantage girls (United Nations 2009). Many programmes directed toward increasing schooling in developing countries, such as the Mexican PROGRESA/Oportunidades conditional cash transfer programme (Behrman, Sengupta, and Todd, 2005) and the Food for Education programme in Bangladesh (Ahmed and del Ninno 2002), give greater incentives for girls to attend school than for boys because of higher enrolments of boys in pre-school (Grant and Behrman, 2010). From this perspective, I would argue that gender differences in indigenous communities indirectly affect the positive capability of

women in Bangladesh. At the same time, at a societal level, indigenous women are excluded due to infrastructural barriers.

The discussion of health exclusion shows that majority of the indigenous women participants are likely to be stigmatized in order to practice of their traditional beliefs and rituals, which excluded them from practising a modern scientific healthy life style (see paragraph 6.3, p.160). In this area, Chowdhury et al. (2002) report that the Chittagong Hill Tracts people have much lower immunization coverage of children under 12 months than the national average: 22 per cent compared to 54 per cent. Therefore, poor health conditions are one of the main obstacles to a better life for indigenous people. It has been suggested that sometimes indigenous people, especially women, are inadequately served by Bengali heath service providers, and that a lack of access to available heath services deprives them of opportunities (functionings). Furthermore, poor health conditions and underdeveloped lifestyles challenge the process of inclusion in Bangladesh. Thus heath protection is linked with various millennium development goals. As I have discussed, good health promotes a country's economic growth and development. For this reason, women's health deprivation and inequality are an impediment to capital accumulation and reduce the integration process into mainstream society.

In the discussion of identity, I have argued that individual and collective identity discrimination generates exclusionary processes in Bangladesh. According to Kramer et al. (2001, p.175) the willingness of individuals to engage in trust behaviour in situations requiring collective action is tied to the salience and strength of their identification with a group and its members. From this perspective, Sullivan (2002) argues that individuals may experience social exclusion in terms of its consequences for their personal identity, while groups and communities may experience exclusion in terms of its consequences for the collective identity. Thus, I agreed with Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) arguemnet that women boarders and boundaries is paradoxical and women used to perceived the state and national boarders differently from men by the imagination of society where a women lives with others members of society.

This research has also indicated that the quality of indigenous women's personal identity at a domestic level produces low self-esteem, which puts them into a marginalized position at a domestic level. In a similar way, the lack of collective

human rights for groups in Bangladesh challenges the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where, 'All peoples have the rights of self-determination', as well as contradicting the United Nations (UN) declaration concerning indigenous peoples. According to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 'Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity' (UN Declaration 61/295, Article 2). But this research has highlighted that lack of recognition of their collective or group identity has been, for indigenous people, an impediment to the processes of social inclusion in relation to the implementation of human rights in Bangladesh. At the same time, these processes also enhance properties required for propelling women's participation on the WAD (women and development) to GAD (gender and development) model as it address the women's respect and empowerment respectively to challenge the existing gender roles and relations' in their particular society.

# The political processes of social exclusion/inclusion: practical experiences of indigenous women in Bangladesh

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the political processes of exclusion and inclusion of indigenous communities, especially the women of these communities, in Bangladesh. In this research, exclusion is operationalized as a multidimensional process with social, cultural, political and economic aspects. I would like to argue, with Room (1995, p.5), that exclusion is more about 'relational issues' (such as inadequate social participation, lack of integration and lack of power) than 'distributional issues' (lack of material resources). It refers to the lack of ability of some groups to participate in the economic, social and political spheres, as well as to their lack of social integration into the mainstream of society. It is from this standpoint that we shall view the political processes of social exclusion that produce the vulnerable and disadvantaged position of women within and between their own communities and Bengali society.

According to the Human Development Report (1992, p.29), 'Political exclusion includes personal security, the rule of law, and freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity'. In this study, the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion are considered in relation to the social network, and to the participation in this, in terms of neighbourhood deprivation, and involvement in family and community decisions, of indigenous communities, especially of the women in these communities, in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, I agree with Sen's (2000) concept of 'development', where the process of development promotes social inclusion and lack of freedom and capabilities explains the informal and constitutive processes of poverty and deprivation. Concomitantly, the capability set reflects the various combinations of 'functionings' which individuals can achieve for their well-being and embraces the political and social dimensions of poverty. From this point of view, we can argue that counter-insurgency, unrest in the political environment, and lack of political participation and unequal decision-making rights, all create the processes of exclusion in indigenous communities. Significantly, these issues may reduce the capability of women of these communities, and increase the long-term poverty, and

they brings in the discussion of the policy agenda in Bangladesh. The diagram below illustrates a theoretical understanding of the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion.

In addition, the diagram highlights the two major political barriers: conflict over decision-making and unequal structural arrangements. Each major theme or barrier is associated with some sub themes (see Diagram 7.1). The interpretation of the political processes of exclusion and inclusion is constructed from the participants' own experiences and views. Therefore, this chapter presents findings about the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion based on participants' empirical experiences and narratives, along with discussion; and it is this discussion that relates to the overall aim of this research. The overall aim of this study is to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities vis-a-vis wider Bangladeshi society. Therefore, the previous chapter also dealt with a subsidiary part of the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in terms of social and cultural issues relating to indigenous women in Bangladesh. Similarly, the next chapter focuses on the economic processes of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to labour market conditions experienced by participants, their employment and opportunities, and the land ownership situation in Bangladesh.

The diagram below shows how political factors influence the processes of exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh. In addition, it highlights the process of 'generalized and persisting disadvantage' (Room, 1995) of indigenous women in Bangladesh, which is broken down in the next section of this chapter. Apart from this, I would like argue why these themes (non-financial decisions and structural arrangement) reflect the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion. In the UK policy context, these themes are analyzed with 'social capital' issues (Fahmy, 2003); and thus they emphasise issues of individual and community development, and of 'quality of life' issues (Roberts and Roche, 2001). For this reason, in this study these themes are identified as making up the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion.

**Figure 7.1: A thematic diagram of the political factors involved in exclusion/inclusion**

## Political Factors

### Decision Making

**Left box:**
- Lack of political participation
- Lack of opportunities for electoral engagement
- Decision- making conflict on non-financial matters
- Unequal administrative structure

**Political Exclusion**

**Middle box:**
- Political and electoral participation
- Law & order/social security/judicial system
- Intra-household relationships in terms of childcare, domestic work
- Neighbourhood/

**Structural Arrangements**

**Right box:**
- **Opportunities** for electoral participation focus civic engagement or citizenship rights
- **Political participation**
- **Freedom of expression** that enhances capacity building

**Political Inclusion**

## 7.2 Decision-making roles and participation

Decision-making is a process in which women mediate the intra-household relationships between their partner and other family members and those at the wider societal level. Many economic studies have shown that household savings and investment are significantly affected by the process of decision-making between women and men (Browning and Chiappori, 1998)**.** In particular, when intra-household financial decisions are made by women, savings and investment are often greater and repayment of debt is more likely. This is because income given to women is more likely to be used for investment in education, children's nutrition, and housing than income in the hands of men (Thomas, 1994; Khandker, 1998; Duflo, 2003).

However, the following table (7.1) highlights the fact that women's participation in household decisions has been increasing, and in 2009 the majority of the households – 60.9 per cent – took joint decisions, that is 23.7 per cent higher than the figure for 2005. It is necessary to point out that the data have some inconsistency, as the total overall percentage in 2005 represents 85.3 per cent of the

population rather than 100 per cent (see Appendix 3). However, in 2009 the total overall percentage was 100 per cent. Allowing for this, I would argue that there has been a big shift (23.7 per cent) towards joint household decisions.

**Table 7.1: Participation in household decisions**

|                  | Year | Percentage | Year | Percentage |
|------------------|------|------------|------|------------|
| Mother [Wife?]   | 2005 | 5.8        | 2009 | 9.3        |
| Husband          | 2005 | 42.3       | 2009 | 29.8       |
| Jointly          | 2005 | 37.2       | 2009 | 60.9       |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2005

In this study, the decision-making themes explain the indigenous women's position at the domestic and public level, and they give an idea about gender relationships in patriarchal and matrilineal communities in Bangladesh. Therefore, this section addresses how much control an indigenous woman has over her financial and non-financial decisions at the domestic and wider societal levels. First, we need to clarify how we define the decision-making process of indigenous women in Bangladesh. Ferber (1973) defined two types of decision at the domestic level, such as financial decisions and non-financial decisions. Financial decisions concern money management, for example paying outstanding bills, making savings and organizing daily expenditure; and non-financial decisions involve the division of leisure, the number of children, work time, visits to friends and acquaintances, and so on. However, this section only focuses on the decisions concerned with power and participation in financial matters. In the next chapter, I will analyse the economic processes of exclusion and inclusion in terms of the income and employment conditions of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

In this study, consideration of the decision-making role is relevant because it encompasses the rights of freedom of expression and association that encourage the inclusion and community participation of indigenous women in Bangladesh. Lucas (2000) has argued that the role of decision-making helps to identify the basic notion of social equality, and therefore, by proxy, the promotion of policies and programmes that encourage social inclusion and are inherent in the core principles of sustainable development. I agree with Agarwal (1997) that the inclusion of women in decision-making promotes their ability to incorporate gender interaction within the

household and the community in Bangladesh. Apart from this, it might be helpful to understand the 'power and control' relationship between men and women within their patriarchal and matrilineal social setting in Bangladesh.  In theory, the discussion of women's role in decision-making determines women's 'bargaining power' (Agarwal, 1997) within the family in relation to their subsistence needs. This reinforces the previous theoretical discussion of Sen's (1981) idea of a 'capability and entitlements' framework in which social exclusion can also been seen as a process of functioning deprivations. In this sense, Agarwal (1997) argued that a rural person's bargaining strength within the family or in terms of subsistence needs would depend especially on the following eight factors:

- ownership of, and control over, assets, especially arable land
- access to employment and other means of earning  income
- access to communal resources
- access to traditional social support systems such as patronage, kinship, etc
- support  from NGOs
- support from the state
- social  perceptions  of  needs,  contributions  and  other  determinants  of deservingness
- social norms.

Working with the above ideas, the following analysis will focus on the decision-making role of indigenous women at domestic and public levels in the context of social exclusion and inclusion.

### 7.2.1 Domestic decisions

Rowlingson and Joseph (2010) have demonstrated that 'Decision-making in couples is a complex process'. In their research, they have identified a broad typology in terms of couples' approaches to decision making. I have used this typology to categorize different types of decisions which are shown in the following tables (Tables 7.2 and 7.3), although I have identified some indicators of women's role in decision-making in their personal and family life.

### Table 7.2: Participation in decision-making by Chakma women at the domestic level

| Decision-making indicator / Types of decisions | Independent decisions (Chakma women) | Joint decisions | Joint decisions but male partner leading | No decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purchasing everyday items | 10 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| Child -care responsibility | 0 | 4 | 0 | 16 |
| Children's education | 0 | 11 | 9 | 0 |
| Doing paid work | 0 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| Moving outside the community | 6 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| Dress/appearance | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Vote- casting | 4 | 4 | 12 | 0 |
| **Total (%)** | **29 %** | **31%** | **29%** | **11%** |

**Note:**

- **N (number of participants) =20**. All participants were Chakma women in different age groups.

- **Independent decisions** shows Chakma women participants take their decision independently

- **Joint decisions** means both husband and wife play equal roles in making decisions

- **Joint decisions but male partner leading** denotes women have involvement in making decisions but the final decision is lead by the male partner or head of the family.

- **No decisions** means there are no discussions but women take this responsibility in order to follow their traditional culture.

The above table highlights how much control Chakma women have over their domestic level decisions. It indicates the 29 per cent of women take their decisions independently at the domestic level. However, 31 per cent of women take their decisions jointly and 29 per cent of women said they had the opportunity to participate in domestic level matters but their male partner or head of household (usually an older male member) played the leading role and took the final decision by themselves. Eleven per cent women replied that there were no discussions of childcare issues in their household. Women took this responsibility themselves as laid down by their traditional socio-cultural practices.

According to research participants, 'Male members are considered the principal decision makers in domestic affairs, in order to follow the patrilineal social structure'. However, sometimes women get involved in minor household decisions, like child rearing, children's education, household duties, social programmes, and so on with their husband or family members. Consequently, Chakma males control the major

decisions like those affecting financial matters, paid work, marriage, property inheritance rights, and so on.

According to the above table, most of the Chakma women stated that they have to do all the household duties like cooking, cleaning and washing every day.  The elderly woman in each family distributes household duties to the other female family members. Apart from domestic labour, most of the Chakma women said that they have freedom to move within their community for social and religious purposes, but if they want to move outside their village or community, they have to get permission from the head of their household. Moreover, Chakma woman move around villages and neighbouring areas in their everyday occupations like collecting forest grown vegetables, firewood and *jhum* cultivation. In addition, they go to the markets to shop and sell their vegetables or homemade cloth. Apart from these activities, Chakma women are quite reluctant to go to different places even within their community.

On the other hand, Garo women participants informed the researcher their *chra* (maternal uncle) occupied the most important and powerful position within a family. He is the principal decision maker in every Garo household. Participants explained that they needed to consult their *chra* to make any major decision, for example concerning marriage, divorce, land ownership, and so on. According to a participant:

> *Under the customary laws, our chra is the most honoured and respected person in every household. He has absolute power over the matters of the mahari' [clan]. When a nokna (the female who inherits the property) needs to choose next the nokna, we have to consult with our chra to select the next nokna for properties to be passed down through the maternal line. The other male relatives have to follow what the chra tells them to do* (Ajanta Mankin, aged 37).

Another participant from the Garo community said:

> *Most of the domestic decisions such as those about children's education, employment, paid work, and so on are initially discussed between husband and wife or among the family. If it is considered a major issue, like marriage, divorce, or land ownership, then before making any final decision we need to consult our chra to make the final decision. Actually, our chra maintains the*

*relationship between the two ma'chongs and they have to look after the welfare of all the families of the maternal line* (Rachana Sangma, aged 36).

This means that the matrilineal system does not allow Garo women to take all household decisions. As the chra is always a male family member, the major power is indirectly controlled by 'patriarchal' values. It is therefore can be argued that the matrilineal images of Garo women is likely to be degrade in most public spheres. However, the following table (Table 7.3) indicates that joint decision-making is more likely to be practiced in Garo households. Forty four per cent of Garo women said they made their decisions jointly, where as only seven per cent women said there was no decision taking place in any specified issues. However, childcare duties are often carried out by women, though 8 out of 20 (40 per cent) of Garo women participant said that they carried out their responsibility jointly and thus they made their decisions jointly in child-care issues.  In this case, 4 out of 20 (20 percent) of Chakma women said they carried out their responsibility jointly, and 80 percent of women informed that there is no discussion of child-care issues in their household, as it is considered the women's responsibility (Table 7.2).

**Table 7.3: Participation in decision making by Garo women at the domestic level**

| Types of decisions / Decision-making Indicator | Independent decisions (Garo women) | Joint decisions (Couple/ head of the family) | Joint decisions but male partner leading | No decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purchasing everyday items | 12 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| Child-care responsibility | 0 | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Children's education | 0 | 17 | 3 | 0 |
| Doing paid work | 2 | 15 | 3 | 0 |
| Moving outside the community | 8 | 9 | 3 | 0 |
| Dress/appearance | 18 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Vote- casting | 4 | 3 | 13 | 0 |
| **Total (%)** | **31%** | **44%** | **18%** | **7%** |

**Note:**

- **N (number of participants) = 20**. All participants were Garo women in different age groups.
- **Independent decisions** shows Garo women participants take their decision independently
- **Joint decisions** means both husband and wife play equal roles in making decisions
- **Joint decisions but male partner leading** denotes women have involvement in making a decision but the final decision is lead by the male partner or head of the family.

- **No decisions** means there was no discussion but women take this responsibility in order to follow their traditional culture

In terms of freedom of expenditure, Bleie (2005) argues that A*divasi* (indigenous) society in Bangladesh creates a disjunction within households. The decision-making power of the male member over women is quite usual and most of the time the male member claims part or full money for their own personal expenditure such as the purchase of alcohol or repayment of debt. This debt could be either personal debt or debt for the household's common good. This idea is common among the Chakma community in Bangladesh.  Participants said that Chakma males have full control over their own and other family members' income and they need to get permission from their husband/father to spend their income for their personal needs. However, I would argue that the position of Garo women in decision-making is better than that of Chakma women. Since women inherit the family property, their opinion plays an important role in the decision-making processes of property ownership and other domestic issues. This means, in order to practice the matrilineal social system, Garo women almost equally control the minor domestic decisions with the head of the household or male member of their families.  In this context, a Garo woman said,

> *I live in a house with my three children. After the death of my husband, I didn't want to go for a second marriage and also my children were very young. The major property does not belong to me even though I am the elder daughter of my family.  My younger sister was nominated as nokna, according to our customary laws...though I got a share, but I had to sell it to repay the loan that my husband and I took out for his period of treatment. Now I work in the field and I make all my domestic decisions independently. However, sometimes I do consult my brother if I need to make any major decision such as about my children's marriage, selling property and so on'* (Mausomi Drong, aged 47).

In addition, indigenous women are restricted in their ability to move long distances outside their community areas, due to a lack of security. Indigenous women usually move about within their local areas, for example taking children to school, going to the fields or markets, visiting relatives or neighbours homes, going to church and so on. According to one Garo woman participant,

> *I have to do all my domestic work such as childcare and rearing, cleaning, washing, cooking, serving food for family members (in-laws) by myself. I only*

*have an opportunity to earn some money in a particular season, which is not enough for us. My husband is not alive. For this reason, I have to depend on in-laws. They respect me in terms of making domestic decisions, but I have get permission from my mother in-law or father in-law to go outside, do paid work activities and also to send my children to school* (Pratima Bazi, aged 39).

With the above findings, this research shows that the unequal participation and management with structural barriers in household decisions of indigenous women challenges the inclusionary processes of a society. Therefore, in the context of social exclusion, most of the Chakma indigenous women feel excluded within their own household due to unequal decision-making. This may suggest that Chakma women are likely to fall into more vulnerable positions, like other rural Bengali women (see Chapter 2), at the domestic level, in comparison with Garo women. Similarly, the data indicate that members of the Garo community are more equal in terms of decision-making roles in the domestic sphere in comparison with the Chakma community in Bangladesh. However, the ratio does not show high differences between them, and also it is difficult to make any generalization from such a small sample size (N=20, from each community). At the same time, differential internalized status and power relationship attribute to indigenous women's decision making in public-private dualism.

## 7.2.2 Public decisions

In the context of political exclusion, the consideration of participation in public decision-making is relevant as it connects to the notion of 'equal citizenship rights'. Political philosophers have explained that the legitimacy of democratic constitutional practice is based on two main basic principles: constitutionalism and democracy (Tully, 2005). The principle of democracy requires that, 'The people or peoples who comprise a political association are subject to the constitutional system. They, or their trusted representatives, must also impose the general system on themselves, in order to be sovereign and free, and for the association to be democratically legitimate' (ibid, 2005, p.193). This means democratic freedom not only allows people to participate in general elections or vote-casting at State level, it also allows every person to have personal liberty and the autonomy to show their views equally with all citizens. In this research, participation in public decision-making roles suggests the position of indigenous women in wider society. Concomitantly, it shows

the reciprocal relationship between indigenous communities and Bangladeshi society as well.

Women are not found in the traditional leadership position in the Chakma community. This will also be explained in the next themes I shall deal with, which relate to administrative structure. Participants stated that there were no women who held the position of *karbari or* headman in the Chakma community.  Women are ignored in the social and community decision-making processes. However, after the Peace Accord, the Government of Bangladesh and the PCJSS agreed to reserve three seats for women in every Hill District Council and to have two female members from the CHT indigenous community, with one seat being allocated for Chakma women in the Regional District Council (RDC). This was the first inclusion of Chakma women in political participation in the public sphere in Bangladesh. Since traditional practices excluded women from participating in community decision-making process with male members within their community, State intervention in CHT areas included women in public spares for their development activities. Besides these, in indigenous societies in Bangladesh, especially in the CHT, women enjoy access to mobility within public places; but that is towards the *jhum* fields for food cultivation beside men, towards the forests/woods for firewood collection, towards water sources for water collection and so on, only so that they can continue with their family life.

On the other hand, Garo participants (both male and female) said that they have rights and access to participate in the wider society and in national state-level politics. Garo participants claimed that nowadays they can easily integrate into centralized political units, for participation in *upazilla* elections and so on. In Bangladesh, rural people exercise their democratic rights to cast their vote in centralized political units. However, the State has the highest authority and is concerned with urban development programmes; thus on the whole Garo people engage in local political changes, which directly relate to the state system. However, there have been some Garo male members who have engaged in various political activities, such as becoming the elected members of local political communities and so on.

At the same time, the findings of this research show that Garo women are less visible in public decision-making processes, except when casting their votes in the national general election in Bangladesh. Their vote-casting participation in general

elections tends to show the potential capability of Garo women to participate in state affairs. In addition, all Garo participants received their national identity card before the last general election in Bangladesh. It is necessary to mention that ID cards are only distributed to Bangladeshi people, as citizens of Bangladesh, by the Government of Bangladesh. This means that the Garos received the same formal status as Bangladeshi people. However, in the Chakma community there are few women who are aware of this issue.

In this regard, Mandelbaum (1988) has argued that 'Women's participation in secular public affairs is minimal as males are suspicious about participation in public affairs and whether they will cast their vote for the right person. They suspect that such public behaviour by their wives would damage their family honour. In such cases, sometimes they even agree to send their wives to their birth family'. Thus, women's movements are controlled in distance, duration, purpose and religious basis; and these ideologies especially obtain for rural Bengali Muslim women in Bangladesh. Kabeer (2001) points out that traditional family ties and the idea of *purdah* (the veil) restrict Bengali women from participating in public activities. Therefore, from early childhood, a female child is made fully conscious by her environment that she is a liability for the family and should play a very submissive role, unlike her brothers (Mandelbaum, 1988). In this research, we see that a lack of opportunities for indigenous women in public decisions means they are excluded from the wider community. Apart from this, the hierarchical relations in families tend to prevent women from taking part in public decisions in Bangladesh.

## 7.3 Structural arrangements

Discussions of structural arrangements suggest how indigenous women interact with the wider community. Additionally, they suggest how women are excluded in terms of administrative formation and management in Bangladesh. Administrative formation and management represent the elected and selected political members of every society. Thus, the structural barriers of the administrative sector that face indigenous women indicate Bengali people's domination over indigenous people, and then indigenous male domination over women in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. In this regard, Clisby (2005, p.26) has argued that 'structural inequalities and constraints arising from differences in women's and men's

gender roles and expectations create both practical and strategic barriers to effective gender mainstreaming in development processes'.

According to the research participants, the Garo follow the matrilineal social system within their community, but men are considered the head of the household. Indeed, Haque (2006, p.91) has argued that, ' The Garo male family member holds double power over his sisters' children; he acts in the role of maternal uncle with special obligations, rights and significance. On the other hand, towards his own children, his attitude is more emotional and less formal'. The following evidence shows the empirical experience of a Garo man in terms of defining a Garo man's position in matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. According to a Garo man,

> *The attitude of Bengali people towards the Garo male is sometimes embarrassing...like some people call us Ghar Jhami (a man who lives in his in-laws' house after his marriage). Some people, especially Bengali men, think we haven't any power in our family. But this is not true...I agree that we do practice the matrilineal kinship system. For this reason women hold the rights of property ownership and our children take their mother's family name as laid down by matrilineal culture. But we are not submissive to Garo women, we believe in equal relations. That's why our head of the household is always a male Garo member* (Sujon, aged 36).

Accordingly, in the Garo community, a groom (husband) has to move to his bride's house after the marriage. Thus, if the bride is the owner of the property, then the groom becomes merely the manager of the property. Traditionally he retains his position in his wife's clan after the death of his wife. In this regard, Bal (2000, p.93) has stated that 'Garo men feel particularly uncomfortable with an image that suggests female superiority and which, therefore, contrasts all the more with the position of Bengali patriarchal society, in which men clearly dominate public life. This means that female ownership of property is not linked to control of the household, since their maternal uncle or *chra* is ultimately considered the head of the household and the person who has the power to take all major decisions such as marriage, divorce, deciding on property ownership and resolving family conflicts. Traditionally Garo people followed the *nokma* or *laskan* custom of settling any kind of dispute or village problem for their own community. In this system, a village headman regulated

all political activities, in which all village activities were included, and gave his rulings. This system of *nokrom* is no longer practiced today. As I went to many different villages, I did not find that any continued the *laskori* political system. But I was informed by people I met that this system was still practiced among the Megalayian Garos of India. Given this, I would like argue that the Garos are not matriarchal; rather they practice a matrilocal system. Therefore, Garo women are not considered major decision makers in their family and at community level. Thus, Majumdar (1995, p.142) has argued that. 'The Garo community introduces us to a near matrilocal or uxorilocal social system'. In addition, it displays its extra-Aryan origins, since Aryan society had a patrilocal social structure (Rahman, 2004 cited in Rahman, 2006, p.83).

On the other hand, the structural arrangements of Chakma women depend on formal and informal administrative management in CHT areas. In the Chakma community, traditionally, a woman carries out all the household duties along with the income-generating activities which are considered the work of the Chakma women in Bangladesh. In a previous chapter (Chapter 5) it was mentioned that Chakma people follow patrilineal and patriarchal social arrangements in Bangladesh. Therefore, their traditional community administrative positions are controlled by Chakma male members in the name of the Chief or Circle Chief. The following figure illustrates the traditional hierarchical administrative arrangements of the Chakma community in Bangladesh.

**Figure: 7.2 Traditional administrative structures**
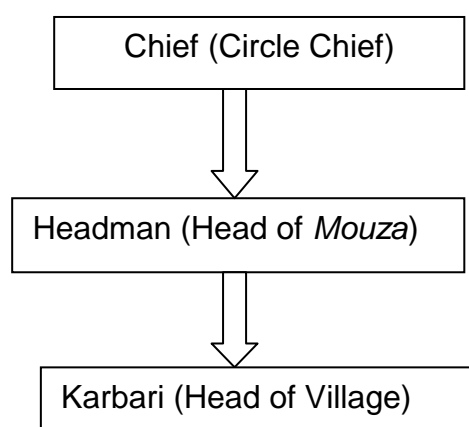


**Chief (Circle Chief):** In 1881, the Government of Bengal divided most of the CHT areas into three 'circles', where each circle was placed under its own chief by the
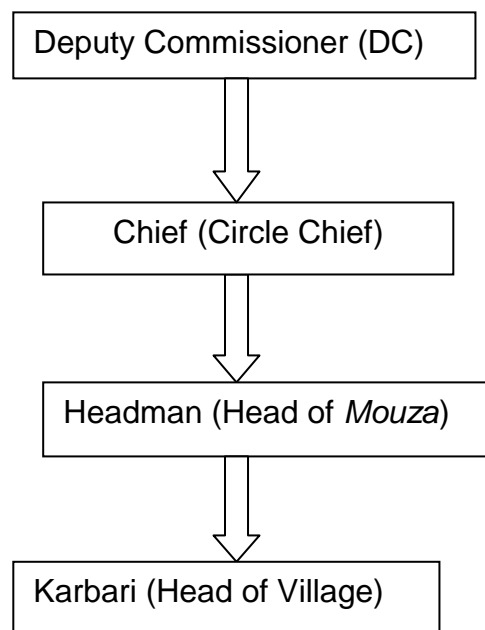
Government. The Chakma circle was placed under its chief in Rangamati, the Bohmong circle was placed under its chief in Bandarban and the Mong circle was placed under its chief in Manikchhari (Mohsin, 1997). The three circle chiefs were to maintain law and order, and dispense justice in 'tribal' courts, in accordance with the customary laws of the tribal people under their jurisdiction (Shelly, 1992 and Mohsin, 1997).

**Headman (Head of *Mouza*[12]):** The headman was responsible for the collection of taxes from the people in his mouza, and also acted as an appellate authority over the *karbari's* judicial functions. The vast majority of the offices of headmen are held by hill people and succession is usually regulated in practice through inheritance by male heirs.

**Karbari (head of Village):** The *karbari* is usually an elderly man who is the traditional head or chief of a village, although participants stated that the *Karbari* was elected by the head of the *Mouza* and then the chief finally appointed him following their custom. To this day, there are no women *karbaries*. The *karbari* is directly involved in the collection of taxes and dispatching these to the headman and presiding over social functions according customary law within their community. Participants stated that a headman may or may not be from the same ethnic group as the majority of the population of a *mouza*, but the *karbari* usually comes from the same people as most of his fellow villagers.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulations of 1900 redefined the traditional structure and created a new post of deputy commissioner (DC). The three circle chiefs were incorporated into an 'advisory council' to the DC for their respective circles' needs. The DC was given 'revisional jurisdiction' over the verdicts handed out by the circle chiefs and the headman had authority to adjudicate disputes among the people living in his *mouza* (Adnan, 2004, p.22).

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[12] The *mouza* is a unit of land and district of revenue administration in Bangladesh that has fixed and demarcated geographical boundaries

**Figure: 7.3 Post 1900 CHT regulation, administrative structure**

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Deputy Commissioner (DC)     │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│        Chief (Circle Chief)      │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Headman (Head of *Mouza*)   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Karbari (Head of Village)   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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After several rounds of negotiations, a Peace Accord was signed between the accredited representative governments of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Somiti (PCJSS) on December 2, 1997 (Adnan, 2004, p.33). This accord incorporated a number of agreements between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the PCJSS. The major agreements of this treaty are given below-

- The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) agreed to set up a separate Ministry of CHT Affairs, to be headed by a minster from among the hill peoples. It also declared that a new body called the Regional Council (RC) would be established with a remit to look after the entire CHT. The Peace Accord redefined the status and power of the erstwhile district councils (HDLGC[13]) and renamed them as Hill District Councils (HDC).

- The government agreed to the rehabilitation of the internally displaced *paharis* (hill people) within the country and also the resolution of land-related disputes by the CHT Land Commission (another creation of the Accord).

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[13] Hill District Local Government Councils established in February, 1989, in Rangamati, Khagrachori and Banderbon districts. The HDCs are directly subordinated to the CHT Regional Council (RC), whose supervisory jurisdiction also includes elected local government bodies and the 'general administration' of the region.

- In addition, with regard to customary laws, both parties agreed to the confirmation of the administrative roles of the chiefs and headmen (and indirectly, that of the *karbaries* as well). The existing authority of the headmen and chiefs to provide permanent resident certificates was included in the authority of members of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission, a quasi judicial body that is expected to provide expeditious remedies to cases of land dispossession and disputes. Thus, the chiefs have been included among the *ex-officio* advisers in the new Ministry of CHT Affairs.

With the signing of the Accord, a partially autonomous self-government system was re-established in the CHT, and the region was officially recognized as a 'tribal-inhabited area'. However, the formation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC[14]) reflected the way of which Chakma groups exercised more power in public sector decisions than other tribal people in the CHT. The GoB agreed that the HDC would be constituted with a Chairman, 12 male tribal members (five from the Chakma, three from the Marma, two from Tripura and one from another CHT tribal group), two tribal female members (one from the Chakma and another from the rest of the tribes in the CHT), six male non-tribal members (two people from each district) and one female non-tribal member. Thus, in the post-Accord situation, *panchayats* (elective village assembly) have not been formally recognized by the reformed CHT administrative system, although in some areas the former leaders of the *panchayats* may, in practice, play an influential role in village social institutions, including village judicial councils that are formally sanctioned by the *karbari* or headman.

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[14] The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) consists of 22 members including the Chairman, who shall be elected by the other hill district council member and who shall be a tribal member. Two-thirds of the members shall be elected from amongst tribal members. The members of the council shall, by indirect mode, be elected by the elected members of the three hill district councils.

**Figure: 7.4 Present administrative structure in the CHT**
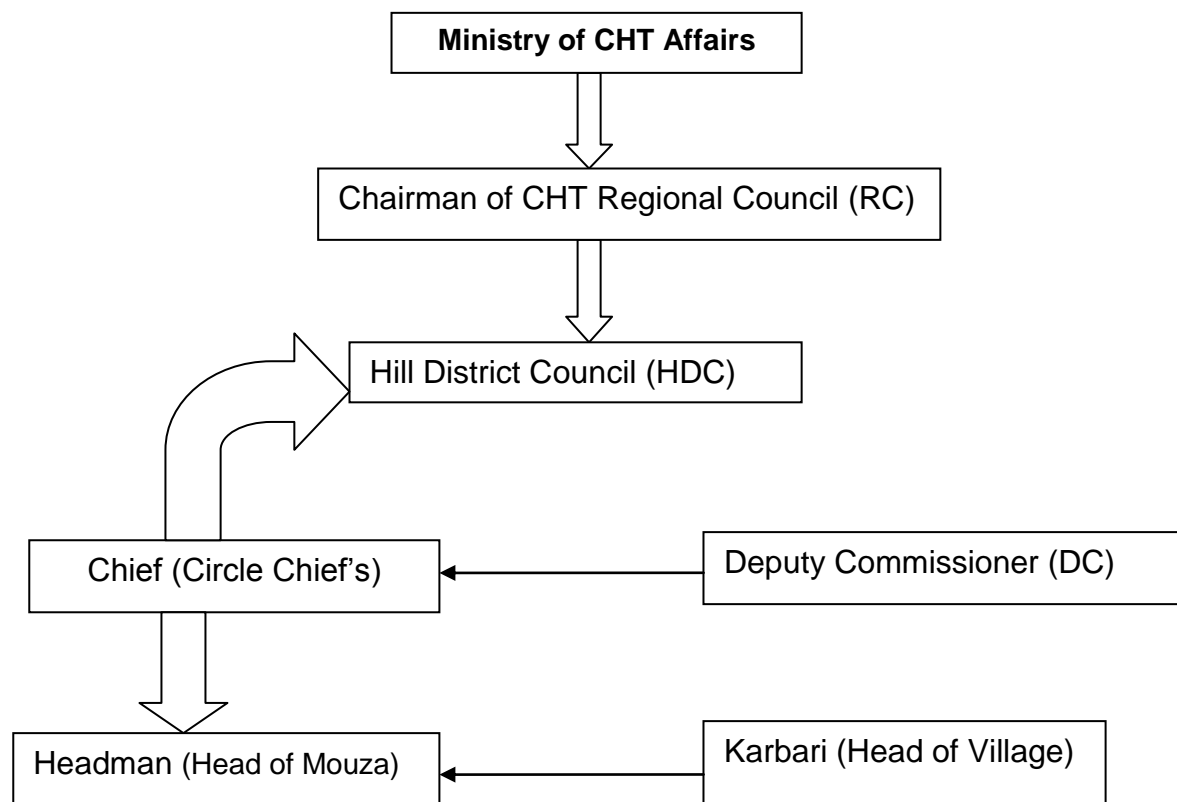


From the above findings, we can say that in the Chakma community women are likely to be visible in administrative positions at the mainstream level, since this arrangement is formally addressed in the policy documents; although I would like to suggest that political participation is much less in comparison with Chakma males in Bangladesh. But at the community level, Chakma women are not allowed to hold any local organizational post in Bangladesh. On the other hand, Garo women are not formally recognized as able to hold any managerial posts in the state level administration. This means their ethnic identity and gender contribute to the process of social exclusion. In addition, the cultural construction of gender relationships in both communities challenges the process of social inclusion in terms of unequal recognition of indigenous women by the formal and informal structural barriers in their own communities and mainstream society as well.

## 7.4 Summary

This chapter has presented findings about the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to the overall discussion of social exclusion and inclusion. In particular, looking at the political processes of social exclusion and inclusion of

indigenous women has highlighted the vulnerable position of women in patriarchal and matrilineal society in Bangladesh (see Table 7.4).

### Table 7.4 Key findings and analysis of political aspects of the Garo and Chakma communities

| DOMAINS | Sub-themes | KEY FINDINGS | | ANALYSIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | CHAKMA WOMEN | GARO WOMEN | |
| **Political aspects**<br><br>• Decision Making | Domestic decisions | Likely take their decisions independently at the domestic level | Garo community are more equal in terms of decision-making roles in the domestic sphere. | Chakma males control the major decisions like those affecting financial matters, paid work, marriage, property inheritance rights, and so on; but the Chakma women are responsible for all household duties.  However, the Garo women almost equally control the minor domestic decisions with the head of the household or male member of their families in order to follow the matrilineal culture. The data also indicates that the ratio does not show high differences between them, and also it is difficult to make any generalization from such a small sample size (N=20, from each community) |
| | Public decisions | Women are not found in the traditional leadership position, but women enjoy access to mobility within public places for electoral participation and economic activities. | Lack of opportunities for electoral engagement but women enjoy access to mobility within public places for electoral participation and economic activities. | |
| • Structural Arrangements | | • Unequal administrative structure<br><br>• Men's are considered head of household. | • Unequal administrative structure<br><br>• Formally women's are considered head of household, but in practice Garo men hold the power. | The structural barriers of the administrative sector that face indigenous women indicate Bengali people's domination over indigenous people, and then indigenous male domination over women in patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh. |

Kabeer (2005) has argued that social exclusion poses a challenge to conventional approaches to poverty reduction policies. She has also pointed out that the spatial disadvantage of remoteness and lack of infrastructure and social services create greater poverty for socially excluded groups and this may translate into poorer levels of health. Thus, social exclusion has a direct impact on the achievements of the millennium development goals (MDGs).

However, in the context of social exclusion and inclusion, this research focuses on the actual experience of indigenous people, especially women, in Bangladesh. Throughout the above discussion, it was found that indigenous women are politically excluded from their own communities and from the mainstream society too. In this chapter, the extent of political exclusion has been ascertained in terms of the unequal decision-making roles and structural arrangements of indigenous women in Bangladesh. In fact, during the interviews, participants were asked whether they considered themselves to be politically excluded from their own community. Most of the participants replied, 'Not really', and then they said 'We do not practice discrimination in our gender relationships, but we do respect our traditional practices'. From this standpoint, I would argue that in many developing countries like Bangladesh, women often negotiate their 'choice and demands' in relation to the cultural constructions of their particular society. Theoretically, the external structure of society may influence the individual choice/agency within the framework of a capability approach (CA). Thus, in the context of CA, choice and agency refer to constraints and internal limitations such as a lack of desire to attain certain functionings [positions] (Hobson et al., 2009). This means that individuals living in situations of deprivation or oppression often adjust their expectations and aspirations downwards (Goerne, 2010). In this research, this idea is linked with indigenous women's internal and external structural difficulties in matrilineal and patriarchal social settings in Bangladesh.

In the area of decision-making roles and participation, Chakma male members have greater control of major domestic decisions, such as children's education, paid work and significant household expenditure. The findings reveal that, relatively, men have more influence on the making of state-level decisions in both communities. Bleie (2005) has argued that the principle of gender parallelism is based on spatial organization of female and male spaces in sample public areas, be they a festival ground, a courtyard or a church. The principle is not rigidly maintained, as women and men may mix in similar clusters or join the same communal dance (Bleie, 2005, p.180).

The position of Garo women in decision-making within their family is somewhat protected due to their matrilineal traditions: the decision-making power within their household depends on their intra-household relationship. It was found that most

Garo women can easily participate in their domestic decisions like childcare, children's education, social movements and so on, which shows their positive image in their community. Due to the practice of a matrilineal social system in the Garo community, women have a reasonable status and an important position within their family and community.  The social, economic and domestic activities of Garo women within their community can be seen as giving them a progressive role in terms of the Bengali community, especially in comparison with Bengali rural women. The Garo men's treatment of Garo women supports the idea that they have an important status within their community. Sanjeeb Drong, one of the famous leaders of the Garo community, stated that 'It is not possible to have a fully fledged realization of the status of women in a particular society without support from their partners and also unless there are safeguards for women within their community life'. These women's experiences reflect some limited social inclusion, which gives them a degree of participation in domestic decisions but still denies them the opportunity to participate in public decisions in respect of political participation in Bangladesh.

Rozario (1992) showed that both Bengali Muslims and Christians considered 'honour' to be a positive male virtue and 'shame' a quality intrinsically connected with women's sexual conduct.  This is part of a cultural construction of gender relations that means that a woman in a fairly wealthy household with surplus food production might be poor if her income level, nutritional intake and control over assets such as land, labour and education are measured (Bleie, 2005). This idea suggests that if wider society (Bengali society) acknowledges the patriarchal model at social and administrative levels, then minority people will often have the same values and culture as wider society. This practice supports the social constructionist approach where a person is seen as part of his/her total life situation, and each part is interrelated to all other parts in a complex way.

Overall, this chapter has addressed how indigenous women are discriminated against in terms of their limited participation in domestic decisions. In addition, it has explored the uneven administrative management culture of the wider community in respect of indigenous women in Bangladesh. Particularly, it has indicated the typical patriarchal culture and male domination over women in Bangladesh, and the way this discourages the inclusionary process in relation to indigenous women in Bangladesh.

# The economic aspects of social exclusion and inclusion: experiences of indigenous women

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the economic aspects of the social exclusion and inclusion of Chakma and Garo indigenous communities, especially the women of these communities, in Bangladesh. The first section analyses employment and economic opportunities in terms of the nature of the work available and the situation in the labour market. The second section explains land inheritance rights and their practical economic implications for the women of these indigenous communities in Bangladesh. I would like to argue that economic or financial elements are the core factors in any study of social exclusion and inclusion in developing countries like Bangladesh, whether these elements are directly or indirectly linked with the different processes of social exclusion and inclusion.

Discussions of exclusion tend to focus on the phenomena of poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment and lack of access to social and political institutions (Oxoby, 2009). I agreed with Oxoby (2009) that the concepts of inclusion and exclusion are multidimensional, involving more than just poverty and inequality. Such an understanding allows discussion from a gender perspective in this research, which explores the position of women in matrilineal and patriarchal communities in Bangladesh in terms of their economic or financial capacities. This chapter emphasises that exclusion is created by the force of economic deprivation or lack of economic capabilities – factors that were identified by the women of the Garo and Chakma communities themselves.

The economic aspects of exclusion may involve individual or societal financial or economic barriers. According to the United Nations (2007), 'Economic exclusion gives rise to the issues of employment, diversity of access to goods and services, and urban/rural segregation. Additionally, it encompasses the aspect of spatial exclusion, where disadvantages are based on both who you are and on where you live, including stigmatized, remote or isolated areas'. In other words, there is an economic dimension to the processes of anti-inclusionary or exclusionary polices in a society or community.

Bangladesh is a predominantly agricultural economy, with agricultural production making up 35 per cent, a significant proportion, of GDP (The Europa World Yearbook, 2000, p.581). In rural Bangladeshi society, without husbands, sons, or fathers, women are economically isolated, because they cannot get access to markets, and are also socially ostracized (Ackerly, 1997, p.145). According to Khan (2001), 'Rural poverty accounts for nearly 63 per cent of poverty worldwide, reaching 90 per cent in some countries like Bangladesh and between 65 and 90 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. (Exceptions to this pattern are several Latin American countries in which poverty is concentrated in urban areas)'. According to the Human Development report (2009), female earned income is less than male earned income in all South Asian countries (See Table 8.1). This data suggests that South Asian women are less visible in the formal labour market, therefore they have less income, which puts them in a deprived position at both the domestic and the societal levels. At the same time, it indicates that Bangladesh is less unequal than India or Pakistan in terms of earned income by female and male.

**Table 8.1 Differentials in estimated earned income, in US $, by gender, among South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, 2007**

| Country | Earned Income by Gender in SAARC Countries | |
|---------|------------------|------|
| | **Female** | **Male** |
| Afghanistan | 442 | 1845 |
| Bangladesh | 830 | 1633 |
| Bhutan | 2636 | 6817 |
| India | 1304 | 4102 |
| Maldives | 3597 | 6714 |
| Nepal | 794 | 1309 |
| Pakistan | 760 | 4135 |
| Sri Lanka | 3064 | 5450 |

**Source: *Human Development Report*, 2009**

In this respect, this analysis highlights two themes – employment and economic opportunities; and land ownership rights – that are of major importance in relation to the economic aspects of social exclusion and inclusion for the Chakma and Garo women of Bangladesh, and this is illustrated in Figure 8.1. In addition, each theme is

associated with some sub themes (see Figure 8.1). The analysis of the economic aspects of social exclusion and inclusion highlights the individual and structural economic barriers encountered by interviewees.

It may be that Bangladeshi women – especially rural women – are deprived of equal access to resources, and are thus often seen in marginalized positions, due to having a poorer livelihood than their male counterparts. In this research, economic inclusion indicates the development of women's well-being, especially that of indigenous women – in Bangladesh. In this respect, I would like to argue that unequal labour market conditions and discrimination in the allocation of household assets (rights of inheritance) prevent women from taking advantage of available opportunities in Bangladesh. At the same time, financial capacity explains women's position in patriarchal and matrilineal societies in relation to participation in income-generating activities. This means the analysis relates to the major research question:
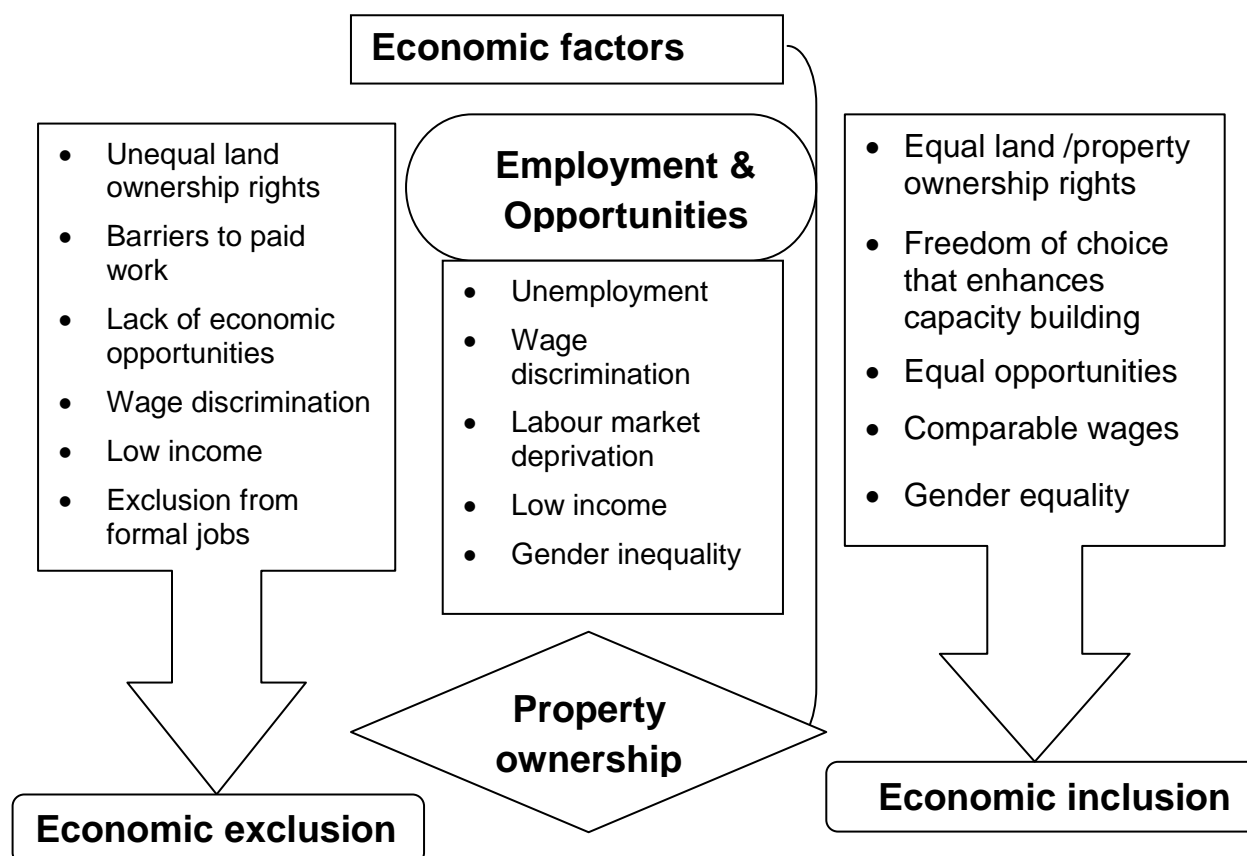
> What are the processes of social exclusion and inclusion for indigenous women within their own communities and mainstream society in Bangladesh?

The processes of social exclusion and inclusion have already been discussed in relation to the socio-cultural, personal and political levels of life in the communities being studied. However, this chapter moves beyond these levels and emphasises the economic aspects of the lives of the women of these indigenous communities. In analyses in the previous two chapters, a number of socio-cultural and political barriers were identified, and this drew attention to the way in which indigenous people, especially the women, limited their functional capabilities due to structural barriers at the domestic and societal level. The previous findings showed that social and cultural constraints in these communities restricted women's access to the mainstream labour market, and thus indigenous women might occupy a marginalized position in their household economy and in wider society too.

The diagram below shows how economic factors influence the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh. In addition, it also shows how indigenous women are economically deprived in terms of both their own communities and wider society. As I have argued, women's well-being is linked to their financial capabilities. Thus, to be empowered, women must gain equal capabilities and equal opportunities to use their rights, capabilities and opportunities

to control their own lives and destinies (UNDP, 2005, p.19). For this reason, we need to look at how employment and economic opportunities and land rights are associated with the economic exclusion and inclusion revealed by research.

**Figure 8.1: A thematic diagram of economic factors involved in social exclusion/inclusion**

**Economic factors**

- Unequal land ownership rights
- Barriers to paid work
- Lack of economic opportunities
- Wage discrimination
- Low income
- Exclusion from formal jobs

**Employment & Opportunities**

- Unemployment
- Wage discrimination
- Labour market deprivation
- Low income
- Gender inequality

- Equal land /property ownership rights
- Freedom of choice that enhances capacity building
- Equal opportunities
- Comparable wages
- Gender equality

**Property ownership**

**Economic exclusion**

**Economic inclusion**

## 8.2 Employment and economic opportunities

Employment and economic opportunities are one of the major indicators of the degree of economic exclusion and inclusion in a society. It has been argued that equal opportunities or economic inclusion imply that all individuals have fair access to the institutions and publicly provided resources that will allow them to develop their capabilities and attain their potential (Oxboy, 2009). Taking this as understood, I would like to argue that an uneven organization of occupations and an unequal labour market play a significant role in increasing the marginalized position of women in Bangladesh. If employment and economic opportunities are available to women in a society, then they can achieve what they need in other areas such as education, health and household assets. However, according to the theoretical framework of

this research (Capability approach by Sen), the absence of employment and limited economic opportunities will discourage women to participate in formal job market. This is further supported by the following statement by an interviewee:

> *We are engaged in the same type of agricultural activities, but unfortunately we aren't receiving equal wages for doing the same work as men. There are not enough job opportunities for us. In this situation we have to accept discrimination, or else we may lose our job (*Pratima Bazi, aged 39).

The above statement indicates that employment is a core element in the accomplishment of other objectives. This analysis draws attention to the nature of work and the situation in the labour market in these communities in Bangladesh, as they explicitly relate to the concept of employment and economic opportunities. In this respect, sub-themes, such as the nature of work and the labour market situation indicate the structural barriers facing indigenous women as they try to achieve economic capability for themselves as individuals and for the well-being of their communities.

### 8.2.1 The nature of work

In many developing countries like Bangladesh, women, especially rural women, are not seen as part of the formal labour market, due to cultural and structural constraints.  In this situation, most of the women interviewees failed to describe their exact position in their household's economy. Most of them said that it was very difficult to identify their main occupation – whether it was raising children, taking care of the house, doing farm work, helping their husband with other income-generating work, and so on. The varied nature of the women's activities would help to explain inconsistencies in statements about the exclusion and inclusion of women in the formal and informal labour markets. During my field work, I observed that women identified themselves as 'housewives', even when they were involved in income-related activities. Elena Marak (aged 26), one of the interviewees, said:

> *We are not doing any formal/official or regular jobs. Our jobs are seasonal. Actually, we are just helping our family. In fact if we have enough money to meet our family needs, then I don't need to work anywhere.*

However, in this research, the nature of the work done by indigenous women was discussed using two sub-themes: domestic work and income-related work. It is

necessary to point out that, generally, indigenous people in Bangladesh are engaged in land cultivation or other agricultural work, and that is directly associated with their livelihood pattern. So, indigenous women and men have been used to working together in the same field, though the frequency of work and types of work may have varied between men and women. Table 8.2 illustrates the nature or types of work done by women in the Garo community.

**Table 8.2 Nature of work done by Garo women**

| Occupational status | | No. of respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Domestic work | Housewife: cooking, cleaning, childcare, feeding family members, gardening, collecting vegetables from the hills, raising poultry etc. | 2 |
| Income-related work | NGO worker/missionary worker | 15 |
| | Day labour in agriculture: harvesting, sowing, reaping, drying paddy or crops and gathering vegetables from the hills and then selling them in the local market | |
| | Sewing, making mats, making handicrafts item | |
| | Teacher | 3 |
| | **Total** | **20** |

Source: Fieldwork

The above table shows that eighteen out of 20 women were engaged in the formal and informal labour markets, although indigenous women are more likely to be involved in informal jobs. However, those women who identified themselves as housewives indirectly contributed to their household income by participating in homestead agricultural work. At the same time, most of the interviewees agreed that both men and women engaged in agricultural activities in the same place, but that according to their domestic level they took on gender specific roles and responsibilities. In this regards, Racha Sangma (aged 34) stated that:

*We cultivate rice three times in a year. That's why most Garo families are engaged in agricultural activities. Those people who have land, they work in their own field (land), and those people who haven't, most of them are engaged in someone else's field with pay.*

Despite involvement in income-generating activities with male members of their community, most of the Garo women interviewees identified themselves as 'housewife', though they had been found to be doing different types of income-related activities. From this point of view, it can be argued that women's income-related activities in the Garo community have been overlooked in their own individual perceptions of economic contributions within their household. Also, their unpaid household work, like childcare, cleaning, cooking and so on, supports their family in its financial development. Consequently, it was observed that Garo women not only engage in domestic work but also participate in other crucial work, including service, labour and professional work.

Similarly, most of the Chakma women engaged in agriculture, handicraft and hunting-related work. Table 8.3 represents the Chakma women's involvement in different types of work. Chakma women not only engage in agricultural production work but are also involved in weaving cloth and making handicraft items with their own handlooms. They raise cattle and buffaloes for ploughing their land. They grow vegetables – sweet potatoes, pumpkins, ginger, garlic and so on – in their fields. These types of work are considered the major source of income for their household economy. However, Chakma male interviewees stated that 'due to globalization, many Chakma people are also involved in trading and small businesses. In the past, Chakma people's life was totally involved with agricultural production'.

**Table 8.3 Nature of work done by Chakma women**

| Occupational status | | No. of respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Domestic work | Housewife: cooking, cleaning, childcare, feeding family members, gardening, collecting vegetables from the hills, raising poultry, etc | 5 |
| Income-related work | Day labourer: harvesting, sowing, reaping, drying paddy or crops, gathering vegetables from the hills and selling them in the local market | 13 |
| | Sewing, making mats, making handicraft items | |
| | NGO worker/missionary worker | 2 |
| | **Total** | **20** |

**Source: Fieldwork**

The findings indicate that most Chakma women participate in their household economy directly and indirectly. Fifteen out of 20 women were involved in outside income-generating activities. These women, who identified themselves as 'housewives', were also engaged in work such as making handicraft items, sewing, harvesting, and so on. In these circumstances, women face a double burden – working in the home and outside – and unfortunately their economic contribution to the family is not recognized by their community. Most Chakma women think of themselves as engaged in household activities, because their skill in agriculture and handicrafts is simply part of their tradition. It is their responsibility to perform all the household work for their families. This means that those women who are engaged in outside work have to fulfil their household duties before or after completing their outside work. This situation highlights the unpaid labour of women at the domestic level, along with their involvement in generating subsidiary household income, though their subsidiary income enhances household financial well-being. At the same time, the burden of domestic duties often creates emotional constraints for women wanting to achieve economic well-being. In this respect, one of interviewee said:

> *There are many women who engage in home-based agriculture or land cultivation activities. We think we are doing these activities because we (Garo women) want to help our family, even though we are not earning enough money* (Laboni Mangsang, aged 43).

Another participant said:

> *I always try to find work in our local area, as I can't do any kind of work a long distance from my house. And it is hard to get a job in the local area, even though it is not formal job. In fact, lots of women are eagerly waiting for local jobs, as we need to prioritize our household duties* (Shila Chakma, aged 36).

From this evidence, I would like to argue that limited opportunities for women produce gender segregation in the labour market and other exclusionary processes in the economy which produce other types of obstacles, and that this can account for the observed concentration of poverty among women. This argument explicitly links women's involvement in a limited labour market with the tendency to perceive them as not capable of doing certain types of work, due to their physical weakness. Apart

from this, the socio-cultural restrictions on indigenous women's mobility and the lack of public cohesion (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7) thoroughly limit women's opportunities for employment, and this is supported by Sharma's study (1980). Sharma identified two reasons for rural women's labour being confined to low-paid jobs: firstly, lack of education and training; and secondly, constraints on women's mobility and public visibility. The findings of this research also indicate that indigenous women are more likely to engage in informal, low-paid jobs due to poor education (Chapter 6) and poor health (Chapter 6), which put them in the unskilled labour group. Bhalla (1999) states that, 'In European societies, unskilled workers who are trapped in precarious jobs have a higher probability of being unemployed and, in particular, being long term unemployed'. My research indicates that indigenous women in Bangladesh are economically excluded due to the relational (social deprivation) and distributional (material deprivation) aspects of their society. The nature of their work expresses women's excluded position in the labour force in Bangladesh. At the same time, I would argue that these women's lives are perhaps affected by a 'double-burden', which means the burden of paid and unpaid work for their family.

### 8.2.3 The labour market

The economic empowerment of women is high on the agenda of the Government of Bangladesh (Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs of Bangladesh). According to a Bangladesh Labour Force Survey (2005-06), about 48.1 per cent of the total labour forces of the country (workers aged over 15) are engaged in agriculture: that is, 47.4 million people (males 36.1 million and females 11.3 million). The annual growth rate for the labour force in the period 2002-2003 to 2005-2006 was 2.21 per cent. During this period, the growth rate for women in the labour force was 5.45 per cent per annum, and that for men 1.23 per cent. While labour force participation (refined activity) in general increased from 57.3 per cent of the population in 2002-2003 to 58.5 percent in 2005-2006, the proportion of women included in the labour force increased at a more accelerated rate, from 26.1 per cent to 29.2 per cent, during the same period.

Chakroborty and Ali (2009, p.99) state that, 'Unemployment, under employment and seasonal unemployment are common problems faced by educated and uneducated sections of people. Currently, unemployment has become a serious problem for

Bengalis, so it is really hard for indigenous people to find work in Bangladesh'. In addition, Chakma males insisted that, 'Bengalese settlers have far lower social status than the hill elites, but they get privileged treatment from the local administration and various government service-providing organs because the latter have the same origin as them'. As a result of this, Chakma women said, they are even more disadvantaged and exploited in the labour market. However, most rural Bengali women in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) areas do not work outside or in the hill areas, because these areas are hard to access; so Chakma indigenous women have more chance to get work around these villages. On this point, Halim (2007, p.114) states that, 'The traditional division of labour in developing societies has allocated hazardous tasks as well as those requiring physical strength like that of men to work for women, which requires both sustained effort and endurance. In this regard, both Bengali women and indigenous women traditionally occupy lower social categories than men'. This discriminatory practice prevents women from improving their economic level in their communities. The following case study illustrates how indigenous women are exploited in the labour market.

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**Case study:** Tara Chakma (aged 50), a married woman, described her experience of being exploited when working in her local area in Bangladesh. Tara completed her Secondary School Certificate (SSC) before her marriage. She could not complete her higher education, due to her father's lack of means. She got married at the age of 21 and her husband was engaged in small trade. After three years, her husband had to sell his business because he got into debt. He then looked for an informal job in the CHT. Since he had not completed his education, he couldn't find a job. Then, he decided to do agricultural work as a day labourer. Unfortunately, his income was not sufficient to keep their family and Tara needed to work for her family's living. She tried to get a job in a local office as a receptionist or sales assistant, as she was educated. But she could not find one. After that she joined her husband in the field as a day labourer, but she wasn't paid the same wages as the other women in the field. The employer said she worked slowly and she could not do the heavier work that the other women did, which she claimed was a mis-judgment by employer. In fact, Tara said she performed her work accurately without taking any breaks. But this is general practice among employers: they exploit women because of the lack of work opportunities.

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According to the interviewees, both indigenous men and indigenous women are discriminated against in employment and other economic opportunities in Bangladesh. It was observed that wage discrimination is a common feature among indigenous communities. On this subject, one of the interviewees said:

> *It is really hard for Garo women to get a formal job in mainstream society, especially a government job. We have very limited seats [a very limited quota] for Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) jobs, and the jobs that do exist are usually taken by, or allocated to, Garo men, or Chakma or CHT people, because they are the most dominant indigenous group in Bangladesh* (Shamoli Laksham, aged 50).

Another Chakma woman named Rani Chakma (aged 28) said:

> *We usually receives lower wages in comparison with Chakma men, although Chakma men are paid lower wages in comparison with Bengali men in the agricultural and other informal sectors (as restaurant workers, drivers, carpenters and day labourers etc.)*

In addition, women's inferior physical strength is considered a significant factor in their lower earning capacity, both in these two communities and in mainstream society. Most men perceived women to be weaker than them, and most women agreed with this verdict. However, during field visits it was noticed that women were more visible in the informal labour market in comparison with male members of their community. The Garo male perception of their women was found to be similar in most cases recorded during the field visit. One of the Garo male interviewee said:

> *Women cannot work hard like us. They are physically weak or their physical strength doesn't enable them to work like us*.

Apart from this, interviewees agreed that their access to the local labour market depended on the agricultural season, but it was hard to access the mainstream labour market. As already mentioned, their principal occupation is agriculture-related work, but during the off-season, especially the monsoon season, they engage in home-based work like sewing, making handicraft items and so on. According to the Bangladesh Economic Review (2007), 63.5% and 11.2% of people are involved in agriculture and business respectively in Bangladesh. But most Chakma male

interviewees said that they wanted to engage in business, in order to gain financial security and raise their living standards to those of the mainstream people in Bangladesh.

Women face challenges in their attempts to access the labour market, especially in mainstream society in Bangladesh. Previous literature has suggested that Bangladesh is a patriarchal society and men are considered the head of the household in almost every household. So, following a matrilineal structure within a patriarchal society is a disadvantage to the Garo community. On the other hand, Chakma women tend to be excluded by patriarchal values. It was noticed that the differential status and power, feelings of inferiority and social insecurity among these women poses exclusion within their own community and mainstream society in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, Bengali women usually have to do all the household work and male members of the household work outside for their living – and the situation is almost the same for the male members of Chakma society. A Chakma woman, on the other hand, is expected to do all the household work and also agricultural work, like harvesting, planting and so on, in their field with their family or husband. However, most of the research participants said that that the majority of the Chakma people are landless. In this situation, both males and females work as day labourers on other people's land.  One of the Chakma male interviewees said that, 'Sometimes Bengali people refuse to work with us because of our tribal or indigenous identity'. But some Chakma women stated that their husbands lost their jobs due to late arrival, irregularities in the workplace, or a drinking habit.

For these reasons, poverty and unemployment are common in both of the indigenous communities in this study. In this regard, one of the interviewees, Kalpona Chakma (aged 36), said:

> *Even given the problem of natural calamities, Chakma people have to face too many complexities in their lives. Nowadays it is really hard to get a job within our local areas, so we have to seek opportunities outside the area. Since there is no equality in the job market, women especially have to face discrimination in jobs or wages.*

From the above discussion, I would argue that indigenous cultures are more likely to reflect an egalitarian structure, especially on engage in income generating activities, with men and women both having gender-specific roles and responsibilities within their communities. Both are involved in the agricultural sector, though at present indigenous males also work in small industries and trades, for example as drivers or NGO workers. Referring to this situation, one of the Chakma women said:

*We (women) usually receive less wages in comparison with Chakma men, although Chakma men get lower wages than Bengali men in the agricultural and other informal sectors (as restaurant workers, drivers, carpenters and day labourers etc.)*

The above statement indicates that indigenous women are likely to face more wage discrimination than indigenous men. However, indigenous men also tend to be discriminated against in mainstream society, due to the marginal position of ethnic groups in Bangladesh. This means that women are in a more vulnerable position in terms of unequal treatment from their community and in wider society too.

## 8.3 Land inheritance rights

Discussion of land or property inheritance rights is relevant here, as it is explicitly linked with the financial aspects of human development. Women's land ownership is one of the crucial indicators of their financial capacity at both the domestic and national levels. Women's property status in any society is one of the critical issues for attention if we are to understand the specificities of gender relations in that particular setting (Luintel, 2001). Agarwal (1995) argues that land is the most valued form of property because of its economic as well as its political and symbolic significance. From this point of view, I would argue that land ownership by women is a key indicator of the women's financial capacity within their households, and it gives women independence in their power relationships at domestic and community levels. According to Deere and Doss (2006, p.3), 'Data from South Asia, home to about 40 per cent of the world's poor, show that poverty is strongly associated with landlessness and insecure access to land. For example, in India, over 30 per cent of the landless and near-landless (with less than 0.2 ha of rural land) live in poverty, and figures are even higher when they cannot migrate. In Bangladesh, those with less than 0.2 ha make up two-thirds of the poor. Moreover, this report suggests that

land ownership increases investment in the human development of children'. These authors argue that property rights are particularly important in determining who is entitled to food, and may serve as a means of perpetuating or breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty. For this reason, the present research discusses the land rights of indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities, in Bangladesh. I would argue that Chakma and Garo indigenous people, especially the women of these communities, do experience discrimination in relation to property or land inheritance rights within their households. In addition, the analyses will explain how this discrimination affects their personal well-being in terms of social cohesion in mainstream society.

In the previous, analysis, chapter (Chapter 7), the matrilineal organisation of the Garo community was discussed. Traditionally, in the Garo community, women have inherited all the property and resources of their mothers; property is passed from mother to youngest daughter, and remains within the mother's clan. According to Garo custom, the *nokma,* the youngest daughter, inherits all the resources and has responsibility for taking care of her mother. The other daughters, known as *agate*, do not inherit property. The parents of the *nokma* select her husband (*nokrom*) for her, and the *nokma* and *nokrom* take care of the bride's parents and look after the family resources (Jengcham, 2007). This indicates that women are the owners of the property, but custom deprives them of any power to make any decision about the use or disposal of the property. Interviewees said that in the absence of a husband, an old person of the *mahari* fulfils this role in respect of property. Speaking about this custom, one of the Garo women said:

> *It is really an injustice that the youngest girl, or sometimes another girl, gains the whole property from the mother. . . . It  is not only an injustice for all girls, but the same problems face all male members of our community* (Geet Rechil, aged 19).

The above statement indicates that Garo women feel discontent at the existing customs, even though they hold the right of property inheritance. Their customs mean that Garo women only hold the right to land; they cannot exercise any power over the land they own.  Of this situation, a Garo man said:

*You know that…things are changing… at present, and we are no longer absolutely following all our traditional customs. We have changed our religion; we have changed our traditional occupations; we now even dress like Bengali people, and we can speak Bengali…. So why do we still follow the traditional inheritance laws?*

This statement indicates that attitudes to the Garo property inheritance system are changing. Most of interviewees (male and female) stated that, 'Garo men are deprived or wronged, and this lowers their status in mainstream society and in comparison with other indigenous communities in Bangladesh, because of their traditional property distribution system'. Most of the Garo men felt aggrieved that they were maintaining all the property, but weren't enjoying property rights.

According to most of the research participants, 'Not only fathers, but also mothers now want their male child to enjoy property rights'. For example, if they buy property, they usually put it in the name of their male children. Nowadays, Garo women also feel that their children should have equal inheritance rights. In this situation, I would like to argue that, with their integration into mainstream society and the influence of Christianity, there has taken place a radical change in attitudes to property rights among the Garo people. They feel that their discriminatory property inheritance system prevents Garo people, especially the men, from participating in mainstream society in Bangladesh; and thus both Garo men and Garo women express discontent with their existing system. The data shows that Garo matrilineal inheritance system discriminates against Garo men, but the mainstream patriarchal power being more dominant in their practical lives in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, in previous chapters (Chapter 5), it was discussed that the majority of the Chakma people follow the Buddhist religion; so their property ownership rights are based on this religious system. According to Buddhist property inheritance law, male children inherit equal shares of all the property from their father. Daughters cannot claim any share of the property, unless they have no brothers. However, if the son(s) and the mother agree that sister(s)/daughter(s) should share the property with the son(s), then they can share. If a man does not have children, the wife will inherit all the property. After the wife's death, this property will go to the man's brother. Since the Chakma people have been facing land rights problems in Bangladesh, Buddhist property inheritance laws do not affect their life,

except in the case of elite Chakma families within the community. It was stated by research participants that, according to existing property inheritance laws, women can receive the title to property through gifts and deeds from their family, and through purchasing property from others in their own name. These methods are referred to as 'diverse means' by Chakroborty and Ali (2009). In this regard, one of the research participants said:

> *If a woman does not have any children, she cannot inherit her husband's property, though she is entitled to the use of it for her livelihood until she dies. She does not have any right to transfer or sell this property, unless this is required to settle her husband's debts. If a woman remarries, she loses her entitlement to any share in this property* (Nandita Chakma, aged 48).

This shows that Chakma women have no legal rights to control their property without the consent of the head of their household, who in the case of every family is a man. The above statements interconnect with the idea of 'endowment set' (Sen, 1981). The endowment set is defined as the combination of all those legally owned resources by a person conforming to established norms and practices, not merely to what is sanctioned formally by the state (Osmani, 1993). 'These resources include both tangible assets, such as land, equipment, animals and intangibles such as knowledge and skill, labour power, or membership of a particular community' (Osmani, 1993, p.2). Sen suggest that poverty is a result of inadequate functionings as a poor set of initial endowments and entitlements combine with a lack of capabilities and mean that individuals and households are unable to secure their well-being. This means endowments are those qualities (human capital) that we posses as humans which can be used on order to provide for individuals needs and we might expect it to be gender neutral. In the Chakma community, we have seen that Chakma women's are particularly vulnerable because their endowments are less realisable. Therefore, I would like to argue that Chakma women may have less ability to access resources (i.e. to accumulate endowments) due to differentiation of land rights and lack of access in inheritance by gender power.

However, from the 1860s on, the British colonial state claimed ownership of all land in the CHT (Roy, 1996). The state began to establish monopoly rights over different types of lands and resources in 1865 and 1868. In 1875, two types of forest areas were created: Reserve Forest (RF) and District Forest (DF) (Mohsin, 1997). *Jhum*

cultivation and customary uses of forest resources by the hill people were completely prohibited in RF areas (Adnan, 2004). The newly created RF areas constituted 24 per cent (one-quarter) of the total area of the CHT and the people of the CHT were excluded from this (Mohsin, 1997). Thus the existence of the hill people's customary rights in these forests was denied by the colonial state. Simultaneously, district forests were put under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner (DO) of the CHT. These forests are currently designated un-classed state forest (USF), and they constitute 75 per cent of the total area of the CHT (Roy, 1996). Tribal people have been allowed to use these lands for their livelihood but have not been granted any official legal rights by the state, thus producing a 'strategic weakness' (Adnan, 2004) in the land rights of tribal people. This weakness has been exploited by interest groups with influence on state power to displace tribal people from their land. Talking about this, one of the research participants stated:

> *Now the Chakma people have been allotted land by the state, but this land was their ancestral land. After the Bengali settlements in CHT areas, especially after the establishment of the Kaptai project and the Karnaphuli Paper Mills in CHT, some Bengali people illegally took over our land* (Himani Chakma, aged 50).

Adnan (2004, p.50) suggests that, 'Large numbers of hill people have been displaced and forced to move because of state violence and ethnic conflict, leaving their land and homes unprotected'. Roy (1997, p.171) states that in many such instances, settlers are reported to have illegally taken over *pahari* (hill people's) lands in their owners' absence. In fact, during the rule of the late President Ziaur Rahman, in 1977, with its counter-insurgency operations and militarization, the Chakma people realized that it would be very difficult to survive in the CHT under the constant threat of Bangladeshi military persecution. As a result, many of the Chakmas began to migrate to neighbouring states of India as refugees. According to Brigadier Sailo, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram, 'About 40,000 Chakmas entered Mizoram in 1983, and in April-May 1986 about 50,000 Chakma refugees entered the Indian state of Tripura. These refugees settled in the southern district of the state in five refugee camps situated at Kathalchhari, Karbook, Pancharampara, Silachhari and Takumbari' (Debbarma and George, 1993, p.50). Discussing this, Shelley (1992) argues that, due to the problem of insurgency, the CHT was considered to be a

backward area without the basic infrastructure for development and an organized market system, and to have a prehistoric mode of cultivation. This was what led to a lot of Chakma people losing their ancestral land and continue to do so. In this context, it is important to know about the current property laws relating to indigenous people and the constraints on their ownership of land in Bangladesh, even where the laws have been formed only to protect the CHT people's land.

### 8.3.1 Current laws relating to the land of indigenous people

This section deals with the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950, and its implications for indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh. At present, the only direct provision for protecting the land rights of indigenous people is provided by the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950, which has already proved itself inadequate for the achievement of its objective. The Act stipulated that transfer by an aboriginal *raiyat*[15] *of* his right in a land holding, or in any portion thereof, should not be valid unless it was made to another aboriginal permanently residing in Bangladesh[16].

If an aboriginal *raiyat* desires to transfer a land holding or any portion thereof by private sale, gift or will to any person who is not such an aboriginal, permission from the Revenue Officer is necessary.[17] But the necessity of this prior permission was not made automatically enforceable in every area; rather it is subject to proper *gazette* notification. Besides this, in this Act the terms 'tenant' and *raiyat* have been used for distinct purposes: 'tenant' indicates the holder of any kind of land; but *raiyat* indicates the holder of agricultural land. In fact, in the Act, *raiyat* refers only to the agricultural land owner; not to the non-agricultural land owner.

According to the Act, an aboriginal *raiyat's* power to mortgage his land is restricted to only one form of mortgage, namely, a complete, usufructuary[18] mortgage. But the restriction on types of mortgages does not apply to those mortgages granted to

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[15] The State and Tenancy Act, 1950, was formulated in the British period in Bangladesh, and thus the name aboriginal raiyat was used, as the British administration identified these people as aboriginal, and raiyat means agricultural land owner

[16] Section 97(2) of The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

[17] Section 97(3) of The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

[18] A legal term describing a situation in which a person or company has a temporary right to use and derive income from someone else's property (provided that the property isn't damaged)

government or financial institutions who want to use the money for agricultural purposes. The Act also permits the granting of usufructuary mortgages to non-Adibashi (Bengali people)[19]. It gives Bengali people the chance to gain raiyats' land. It is also stated in the Act that no decree or order shall be passed by any court for the sale of the right of any aboriginal *raiyat* to his holding or any portion thereof. Nor shall any such right be sold in the execution of any decree or order. But this is not applicable to decrees obtained by the government or the Bangladesh Krishi Bank or the Agricultural Corporation or a co-operative society[20].

I would argue that these unequal laws relating to property undermine the economic development of the Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh. Indeed, the unequal property ownership and land distribution system creates tensions in these people's social relationships. As a result of the complexity of the state laws relating to land, and the seizing of unprotected land by some local leaders and informal money lenders, indigenous people, especially women, often face serious economic deprivation within their own communities as well as in relation to mainstream society. Therefore, the above analysis fits the theoretical framework of this study where it relates to Sen's (1985) idea that commodities (in this case land rights) provide the capacity to maximize one's welfare (here, inclusion) and this results in utility (economic outcomes). It implies that state policy on land rights for the Garo people creates opportunities for some people to seize their land. Interviewees indicated that they knew they could not meet the financial requirements for sorting out their land problems via the civil courts in Bangladesh. However, if they faced problems with local Bengali leaders or with informal money lenders, they could usually get help from authorities like the police or government officials at the Tribal Welfare Association (TSA).

From the beginning of the twentieth century, tribal people began to move towards private ownership of land, especially as they switched from *jhum* cultivation (slash and burn cultivation) to ploughed field cultivation (Brauns and Loffer, 1990, p.40). For instance, members of the Chakma elite brought Bengali sharecroppers to plough their paddy lands in the flat valleys of the CHT (Sopher, 1963). The CHT Regulation of 1900 also gave rights to non-taxable lands as a form of remuneration for office

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[19] Section 97(5) of The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

[20] Section 97(9) of The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

holders in the traditional authority structure – for example for chiefs, headmen and *karbari* (Mohsin, 1997). However, the land settlements and registration processes in the CHT have been largely frozen since 1989, and relatively few title deeds relating to the holding and transfer of Pahari lands have been issued since the Peace Accord.

The above discussion leads me to conclude that the Chakma and Garo people, especially the women of these communities, are deprived of basic household ownership rights. Even though the Garo people have matrilineal social practices, in practice there is a monopoly on power within their households. On the other hand, Chakma women are discriminated against by their traditional land rights system. Therefore, the indigenous women of these communities are more likely to be excluded from land ownership, and they often feel that they lack value, because they lack financial capability.

### 8.3.2 Constraints of land ownership

Land is a productive resource, a financial asset, and often a source of identity, culture and pride. From the above discussion, we have seen that in the two communities, management of land and land ownership have different implications. Given this situation, I have made a distinction between internal (domestic and community) and external (state) constraints on land ownership by indigenous people, especially the women of these communities.

### <u>Internal conflict</u>

The analyses in this sub-theme will explore how indigenous women are excluded in relation to land distribution and land management at a domestic and community level, and will investigate the conflict between patriarchal and matrilineal values within these women's lives. In my analyses in the previous chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) I discussed how indigenous women are more likely to be in a vulnerable position because of socio-cultural and structural barriers. Therefore, indigenous women are less likely to have their role recognized in major domestic decisions. I would like to argue that, in this situation, women's financial incapacity is explicitly linked with their subordinate position at domestic and community levels. As I have discussed, ownership of land or property is linked with the economic aspects of life,

as it gives material resources for human development. In this respect, most of the Garo male interviewees said:

*Garo women's inclusion in land rights gives them a respected position within their own community, even though their rights are controlled by elderly male members of their community.*

The above point indicates that Garo women have to face double obstacles which are imposed on them by their own society and by mainstream society in Bangladesh. This relationship can also be understood according to the Sen (1987) entitlements approach, in which entitlements refer to the parcel of goods over which a person can establish command using the rules which govern his or her circumstances. Therefore, I would argue that control over property ownership fosters the inclusion processes of community development. Apart from conflict over household ownership in their own community, indigenous people also face discrimination from some Bengali people. The following case study illustrates the how indigenous people are excluded by unfair control over their land by their Bengali counterparts.

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**Case Study:** Joya Dalu (aged 42) was an inhabitant of Ajkipara village at Haluaghat in the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. Her husband was a farmer. They had three acres of agricultural land where they used to cultivate paddy in different seasons. When her husband fell sick, they needed money (15000 Taka or £150), which they obtained by mortgaging their land to a Bengali *mahajhon* [moneylender] in their village. They said that when they borrowed the money they weren't informed that they would have to pay a high rate of interest for mortgaging their land to this moneylender. After three years, when they repaid the amount borrowed, they claimed their land back from moneylender. At this point, the moneylender said that they hadn't paid the monthly interest instalments for these three years, and if he (the moneylender) calculated properly, what they had repaid wasn't enough to pay the interest amount, so how could he return their land to them. He further claimed that as they hadn't paid the total mortgage amount, with the interest, within three years, then it followed, according to the contract, that he was entitled to seize their land. The couple were surprised because, at the time mortgaging, they had not had any idea of these terms and conditions, though they signed the agreement willingly. Finally, they were evicted not only from the land but also from their house in order to pay the interest on the mortgage.

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On the other hand, Chakma women, who have no property inheritance rights, are an example of what it is to be deprived of land ownership and management.  The fact

that these women are not acknowledged in terms of property rights creates significant financial difficulties for them and also limits their opportunities to make any independent decisions about their lives.

## External conflict between the state and private ownership

In 1950, when the government of Pakistan abolished the *Zaminderi* System, it transferred to the Forest Department control over the all tree-covered highlands. Moreover, the Forest Department also took, and continues to hold, control over the lowlands, where the Garos cultivate wet rice. At that time, in order to comply with the state sponsored individual ownership system, Garo landowners had to record their names in the record of rights that took the form of a Cadastral Survey. (This first CS record was created during the British colonial period). The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 empowered the state to seize all rent-receiving interests from landlords and those of their lands held under the *khas* possession system[21]. The tenants were made proprietors of their land, provided they could prove they had rented it directly from their landlord. However, the Garos were totally ignorant about what holding rights meant. As a result, most of them failed to record their names as the owners of their land, and those unrecorded lands were identified as *khas* land, and are now registered as state property.

The interviewees explained that traditionally Garo people had only engaged in agricultural activities. They were known as *jhum* cultivators, and they also practiced wet rice cultivation. For them, land was regarded as communal property, and they had no conception of private property. Later on, some of them began wet rice cultivation on the plain. At this time, land on the plain which was not suitable for *jhum* cultivation was turned into wet land, and it came to be occupied permanently by the Garo people.  However, Garo society gradually moved away from the concept of collective ownership, which was not recognized by broader society, and adopted the idea of private ownership. Due to the arrival of state-sponsored individual ownership, there is now conflict between the traditional land rights of the Garo community and the present land laws, as well as with the land administration of Bangladesh.

In 1955, Modhupur Ghor was declared to be Reserve Forest land, and in 1960 it was declared National Forest. The Garos were prohibited to cut down trees in the forest.

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[21] Section 3(1) of The State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950

Lands that were used for *jhum* cultivation and the adjacent paddy fields were declared *khas* land by the government. From that time on, the Garos could cultivate only those lands that were not declared *khas* land (Yeshmin and Rema, 2006).

According to the research participants, for those lands where Garo people were permitted to cultivate, they had received a temporary ownership agreement, which was called ' temporary *patta*'*.* This gave the land owners the right to cultivate and to transfer their inheritance within their family; but they could not sell the land to other people. The government had the right to cut down trees on this land; and it was allowed to seize the land without paying any compensation. The government also received annual tax payments from the land holders. After some years, landholders became the owners of these lands, receiving what was known as 'permanent *patta*'*.* However, this acknowledgement of the rights of land holders related only to paddy fields. The rights to land on which *jhum* is harvested remain unresolved.

In 1955, *jhum* cultivation was totally prohibited in Modhupur Ghar, and the Garos were compelled to adopt wet rice cultivation. But by that time all land suitable for paddy fields had been seized by the government as *khas* land. From 1962 on, the government allotted those *khas* lands to landless Bengalese. In 1964, the government seized land where the Garos had lived for hundreds of years. From then until 1968, the government sent the Garos notices to say that they were not permitted settlers. The Garos' problems were increased by mining activities on their land, which the Forest Department knew about. According to Sanjeeb Drong, a development worker:

> *Indigenous peoples, especially the Garo people, have been struggling for a long time to get the Eco-park project cancelled, but the government continues to support it. This is the source of continuing tension within the Garo and Khasi communities.*

Garo men may not be able to undervalue the role of women within their community, due to their matrilineal customs. But the practice of individual land ownership, sponsored by the state, is driving them into major conflicts with Bengali people.

In the face of these problems, in 1972, the people of the CHT formally demanded regional autonomy and constitutional safeguards, under the dynamic leadership of Manobendra Narayan Larma, Member of Parliament and head of the new political

organization known as the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS). These demands, however, were summarily rejected. Larma, unfortunately, was killed in an intra-party conflict in 1983, but the movement continues.

Meanwhile, thousands of people were killed; gross human rights violations were perpetrated upon the CHT people; and thousands had to flee for their lives across the border into India (Burger and Whitaker, 1984). After that, a settlement with 'moderate' leaders in 1988, which bypassed the underground movement, led to the introduction of three district-level councils, but failed to bring peace or to win any hearts, which it had ostensibly sought to do.

However, the more serious problem at the moment is the non-implementation of crucial land-related aspects of the 1997 Accord. These include devolution of power to the hill district councils; the resolution of land-related disputes by the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission; the cancellation of land leases granted to non-residents; and the proposed grants of land titles to landless indigenous people.

## 8.4 Summary

This chapter has presented findings about the economic situation of indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities, in Bangladesh. In this respect, two major themes have been identified: employment and economic opportunities; and land rights and management. Kabeer (2000) argues that economic exploitation, marginalization and deprivation are the three basic forms of economic exclusion.

Khan argues that broad economic stability, competitive markets and public investment in physical and social infrastructure are widely recognized as important requirements for achieving sustained economic growth and a reduction in rural poverty. In addition, because the rural poor's links to the economy vary considerably, public policy should focus on issues such as their access to land and credit, education and health care, support services, and entitlement to food, through well-designed public works programmes and other transfer mechanisms (Khan, 2001)

In the context of employment and economic opportunities, the findings indicate that exclusion is visible in the labour market in terms of lack of jobs and other opportunities, and wage discrimination against indigenous women in Bangladesh.

Macpherson (1997) argues that labour market exclusion not only has a direct effect on livelihood but also exacerbates many other processes of exclusion, such as exclusion from basic rights, social security and social identity. Another study has shown that the annual contribution of home-based workers to the GDP of Bangladesh is about Tk 150 billion (US$2.59 billion) (Islam, 2006). But, unfortunately, this contribution is not reflected in government statistics. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2003), the contribution of the industrial sector to GDP in the financial year 2002 to 2003 was Tk 462.37 billion (US$7.99 billion). Of that amount, the contribution of large-scale industry was Tk 325.58 billion (US$5.62 billion), while small scale industry contributed Tk 136.80 billion (US$2.36 billion). Islam's figure suggests that the contribution of home-based workers is larger than that of the small-scale industry (Islam 2006).

On the subject of home-based work, Efroymson et al. (2007) argue that, 'Women who perform housework for pay in another woman's house are also themselves housewives, performing the same work in their own home for their own family members, but this time without pay. That is, the woman performing the same work in two places is paid for a certain task in one home, and not paid for performing exactly the same task in her own home. Further, women with any paid employment are still responsible for most housework, meaning that they must essentially work two full-time jobs at the same time.' I would argue that if women's work were given an economic value, then women themselves would be likely to feel empowered, which would help them to reduce social inequality and foster processes of inclusion within their own community and mainstream society in Bangladesh.

Shekh (2001) argues that generally Bangladeshi women are seen as having a lower status than Bangladeshi men, and their livelihood is thus often inferior to that of their male counterparts, due to lack of equal access to resources. In addition, social and cultural constraints on women's mobility and their market access restrict their ability to contribute to the household economy. However, the findings suggest that the majority of indigenous women participate in the informal labour market. For this reason, women are generally seen as having a reasonable position at the domestic level, especially amongst the Garos. The amount of work done outside the home in the informal labour market does not differ between the two communities; though all

indigenous women have to do their household duties along with their outside income-generating activities.

As a result, many indigenous interviewees could not explain what they usually did in their leisure time. It was observed that they had no free time; even when they fell sick women had to work. For instance, most of indigenous participants said, 'We spend our free time in childcare, visiting neighbouring friends and relatives, sewing clothes, and so on, and especially we do work that we have not been able to complete during the day time'. This point could be relate to the notion of 'cooperative conflict' (Sen, 1987), where he suggest about intra-familial power differentials by women's relative disadvantaged position and bargaining nature in household. He (1987) argues that the traditional household economics tend to overlook women voice, but the household is a pseudo individual where every individual member plays an important qualitative relationship with considerable consensus for their well-being. Sen (1990) believed that conflict may be overt, or convert, for example, women may not express any dissatisfaction with their share resources in the household, such as food, recreations etc., in fact they may play their part in distinguishing between male and female household members when it comes to the optimal distribution of commodities within their households. In this study, the data shows that majority of the indigenous women are involved in post harvest activities within their households, where women play an important role in food processing, horticulture along with their other household work. But the persistent unpaid labour and the devoted nature on their homestead cultivation do not regard their employment status. This also determines that the socio-cultural expectations and labour market constraints may restrict indigenous women's functioning's and give them limited choice or opportunities in Bangladesh. This means the power relationship between male and female may correspond with co-operation (adding to total availabilities) and the other conflict (dividing the total availabilities among the members of the household) within their household.

During the field visit, it was observed that indigenous people are not generally comfortable engaging in business either at a local or a national level, because the mainstream labour market is controlled by the dominant Bengali males. As a result, they participate little in the local labour market, though it would not be difficult for them to obtain work under the dominant Bengali people. In addition, lack of finance

also creates barriers to participation in the local labour market. Recently, some NGOs and Christian missionary organization, including BRAC, CARITAS and World Vision, have provided micro-credits or loan facilities at a small interest rate for the running of small businesses within local communities. In Bangladesh, almost all local NGOs provide micro-finance services to their members, especially women, so that they can start new income-generating activities and contribute to their household economy (Shekh, 2001). Rahman (1986) states that participation in development programmes and having access to loans gives women borrowers the opportunity to make what they themselves consider a 'proper' economic contribution to their household, either by setting up an income-generating activity or by investing in an existing business. This means that households that before used to live on only one income, that of the head of the household, now have the possibility of an input of money from other members of the household, especially the women. Therefore, I would argue that rural indigenous women are now more likely to have the chance to improve their financial capacity and engage in small-scale business, though they still have other barriers.

According to Adnan, 'During the preceding decades, the CHT has been subject to severe demographic disruptions resulting from the impact of the Kaptai project and subsequent rounds of armed conflict, eviction and forced migration, engineered population movements, etc' (Adnan, 2004, p. 67). After the Peace Accord, indigenous people, especially women, were scared by the political activities and counter insurgency activities that went on among indigenous people and mainstream Bengali people, even though most of the research participants agreed that after the Accord various development intervention projects were set up by government, local and international organizations. In this regard, Professor Nazmul Karim said:

> *…if an area is not easily accessible for geographical reason…law enforcing persons cannot reach their easily. So, murder, dacoit, hooliganism or quarrels continue there* (cited in Majid, 2005, p.155).

According to Debbarma and George, there were numerous socio-economic problems that became politicized and ultimately led to unrest among the Chakmas of the CHT:

*According to the constitution of 1972, all land was placed under a common land law which recognized a citizen's fundamental right of free movement and settlement within all parts of the country's boundary. Internal migration among the landless peasantry has been a common or usual phenomenon in Bangladesh. Poverty and unemployment has compelled the landless peasantry in the country to move from place to place in search of seasonal harvesting and employment. Added to these natural calamities such as cyclones, floods and tidal waves have rendered millions homeless from time to time and forced them to move to safer and higher places (Debbarma and George, 1993, p. 42).*

Conflict and mistrust between plains settlers and the indigenous people have created tensions, which sometimes turn into confrontation and clashes. There is also conflict among the six ethnic groups of the area. Ordinary hill people have even had to sacrifice their rights in the face of vested interest groups formed by a combination of Bengalis and people of ethnic origin.

To sum up, I would like to argue that limited work opportunities, discrimination in the allocation of jobs, wage discrimination, unequal property inheritance rights and landlessness have put indigenous women in a marginalized position within both their own communities and mainstream society. As Chakma women have no legal rights to inherit the family property, their economic dependency on their father or husband creates insecurity and may put them in a marginal position within their household. On the other hand, Garo women enjoy the legal rights of property inheritance due to their matrilineal practice, though in practice, Garo men have control over their property (see Table 8.4).

## Table 8.4 Key findings and analysis of economic aspects of the Garo and Chakma communities

| DOMAINS | Sub-themes | KEY FINDINGS | | ANALYSIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | CHAKMA WOMEN | GARO WOMEN | |
| Employment and economic opportunities | The nature of work<br><br>• Domestic work<br><br>• Income-related work | Unpaid household work, like childcare, cleaning, cooking and so on.<br><br>Agricultural production work, day labour and NGO worker etc. | Unpaid household work, like childcare, cleaning, cooking and so on.<br><br>Agricultural production work, day labour and NGO worker/missionary worker | The Chakma and Garo indigenous women are more likely to be involved in income generating activities within their community life; and most of these people in both communities engaged with informal jobs such as agriculture, day labour, handicraft and hunting-related work etc.<br><br>Limited opportunities for women produce gender segregation in the labour market which is almost similar to Benagali women, especially rural women in Bangladesh.<br><br>The findings of this research also indicate that indigenous women are more likely to engage in informal, low-paid jobs due to poor education and poor health, which put them in the unskilled labour group |
| | The labour market | • Lack of economic opportunities<br>• Wage discrimination<br>• Low income<br>• Exclusion from formal jobs | • Lack of economic opportunities<br>• Wage discrimination<br>• Low income<br>• Exclusion from formal jobs | |
| Land inheritance rights | Current laws relating to the land of indigenous people | The Chakma women have no legal rights to control their property; but they can receive the title to property through gifts and deeds from their family and through purchasing property from others in their own name. | The Garo women's are the owners and inherits of the all property; but they do not hold any power to make any decision about the use or disposal of the property. | The women of these communities are deprived of basic household ownership rights; even though the Garo people have matrilineal social practices, though in practice, Garo men have control over their property. At the same time, Chakma women are discriminated against by their traditional land rights system also. |
| | Constraints of land ownership | Unequal land ownership rights.<br><br>Landless.<br><br>Conflict and | Temporary ownership agreement from State<br><br>Conflict and mistrust between plains | Unequal property inheritance rights and landlessness put Chakma indigenous women in vulnerable position; at the same time lack of full power and control over the |

| | | mistrust between plains settlers and the indigenous people. | settlers and the indigenous people. | property rights put Garo women in subordinate position at domestic and community levels too. |
|---|---|---|---|---|

The findings also show that indigenous women from both communities are more visible in the informal labour market than mainstream rural women in Bangladesh; but they tend to be excluded from the formal labour market due socio-cultural and economic constraints. In this regard, Halim (2008, p.77) states that, 'Constitutional exclusionary practices not only lead *Adivasi* [Chakma women] to become easy victims of various forms of violence by different forces of the state; the hidden transformation of their role from that of traditional women to 'active participation' in the case of the CHT autonomy struggle has made them even more vulnerable to exploitation'. This means that the vicious circle of exclusionary processes affecting indigenous women ensures that they have a vulnerable status both at the domestic and the state level in Bangladesh.

# Conclusion

## 9.1 Introduction

The four preceding chapters (chapters 5-8) have presented the findings from this research along with the thematic analysis.  This chapter connects the overall theoretical arguments with the data which have illustrated how indigenous people's, especially indigenous women's, lives are impacted by exclusion and inclusion discourses in Bangladesh, and then draws conclusions and considers the further work which may develop from this research.

For this purpose, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the nature of poverty in Bangladesh and includes a discussion of how I operationalised the concept of social exclusion and inclusion from a gender-based perspective. The second section draws attention to the significance of this research and discusses the overall methodological framework for the thesis. The third section illustrates the way in which the theory and findings relate to the research questions, and explores the participants' experiences of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh. The next section discusses the policy implications, particularly highlighting the weaknesses of policies initiated by the state, and then incorporates into the discussion a number of recommendations for the development of indigenous communities, especially indigenous women in Bangladesh. Finally, I have drawn a conclusion from this thesis that will probably bring about a change in conventional poverty research in Bangladesh.

## 9.2 Gender and social exclusion and inclusion

Bangladesh is a country with absolute poverty, whether absolute poverty is measured by the direct calorie intake (DCI) indicator, the food energy intake (FEI) indicator, or the cost of basic needs (CBN) indicator (see Chapter 3). Here, the CBN indicator is used to set the upper poverty line and the lower poverty line in Bangladesh, and the CBN method shows that the proportion of people whose expenditure on consumption fell below the (upper) poverty line was 49.8 per cent in 2000. However, in rural areas the proportion was 53.2 per cent and in urban areas it was 36.6 per cent. This indicates that in rural areas there has been a modest improvement from the 55.3 per cent found in 1995-1996; but in the urban areas there

has been deterioration, with 36.6 per cent in 2000 as against 29.5 per cent in 1995-1996 (PRSP, 2005). This means that urban poverty has increased in comparison to rural poverty in Bangladesh, but poverty is still more widespread in rural areas.

In addition, it has been reported that women constitute half of the total population (about 49 per cent or 71.6 million of 146.6 million) of Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2009). A large number of women are now engaged in economic activities in agriculture and other sectors in Bangladesh (ADB, 2010), although assessment of women's position at household and state levels is often glossed over in policy development documents.

On this point, the study by Bridge (2001) states that aggregate national poverty estimates based on household surveys (whether based on income or food availability indicators) and 'considerations of poverty' has often neglect differentials between men and women in terms of their access to income, resources and services. Such differentials may occur between men and women within households, or between individuals (i.e. between single men and single women), or between households headed by women and male-headed households (Bridge, 2001, p.1). Bridge's report also highlights the fact that poverty reduction programmes may not reach women directly, due to their lack of control over productive resources or output, as well as (particularly for poor women) lack of time. Therefore, this research has primarily focused on women from a broader gender-based perspective and explores the processes of social exclusion and inclusion with particular reference to Bangladesh.

The above argument also demonstrates that previous research into poverty has not directly emphasised the processes of social exclusion/inclusion in Bangladesh. However, the present research was carried out to identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion, and this initiative was incorporated into a multi-disciplinary view of poverty that included the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of social exclusion/inclusion in Bangladesh.

Alcock (2006) and many development economists, sociologists and policy makers have argued that it is difficult to provide a universal and unambiguous definition of poverty.  With the various understandings of poverty in mind (see Chapter 3), my initial idea was to investigate how the notion of poverty was defined in developed

countries. In doing so, I looked at policy papers in the developed world, especially in the United Kingdom, where the concept of poverty is largely discussed in relation to the notion of 'social exclusion'. It is from this standpoint that this research has sought to develop knowledge and understanding of Sen's 'capability approach', which addresses poverty as 'the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes' (Sen, 1999).

At the same time, this thesis has questioned how social exclusion can be defined in an area of absolute poverty, as it is generally considered using a relative definition of poverty. I agree that 'absolute definitions of poverty necessarily involve relative judgement to apply them to any particular society; and relative definitions require some absolute core in order to distinguish them from broader inequalities' (Alcock, 2006, p.68). Indeed, Barnes (2002) and Rogaly et al. (1999) argue that poverty and social exclusion have been placed on a continuum, with poverty at one end and social exclusion at the other, and 'relative deprivation' mediating between the two. However, Lister (2004) and Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) suggest that social exclusion and poverty overlap. In fact, in much of the existing literature (European Commission, 1992; Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997) on poverty and social exclusion are discussed as different dimensions of deprivation. In this thesis, the concept of social exclusion has been linked with Sen's capability approach and the level of social exclusion has been identified with the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of indigenous people's lives. As Levitas (2005, p. 21) states:

> Exclusion is understood as the breakdown of the structural, cultural and moral ties which bind the individual to society, and family instability is a key concern.

Therefore, the operational definition of social exclusion was developed in the following way:

> Social exclusion refers to a condition of deprivation that manifests itself in individuals and societies due to unfavourable developments in society. It is experienced by groups of people (in this case, indigenous peoples) as objective deprivation and subjective dissatisfaction with their life chances, due to a lack of opportunities and choices, inadequate social participation, lack of social integration, lack of power or political participation, and lack of collective resources such as educational facilities, health facilities, land rights and so on.

On the other hand, the operational definition of social inclusion denotes a process of full or partial integration into the society in which one lives and, to a lesser extent, into the wider society. It includes being allowed space to realize one's rights, pursue a living, and take full part in all the affairs of life. Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of social inclusion is often used as the antithesis of social exclusion where the process of social inclusion challenges the processes of social exclusion. In this study, social inclusion is defined as 'the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to public capital and services, and development opportunities' (Bennett, 2002 and DFID/World Bank 2005, p.5). Thus, the overall aim of this thesis has been:

> To identify the processes of social exclusion and inclusion within the Chakma and Garo indigenous communities vis-a-vis wider Bangladeshi society.

Apart from the concept of social exclusion and inclusion, another primary concern of this research has been to develop a perspective on gender as a contributory factor to social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh. I agree with Kabeer (1997) that gender inequality and poverty result from distinct, interlocking, social relations and processes. And the gender dimension of poverty indicates how men and women experience poverty in different ways and women are likely to suffer from poverty more acutely than men in rural Bangladesh.

This thesis has argued that indigenous women are more likely to be excluded from wider society with regard to legal or human rights, educational opportunities, organised religion and economic and political participation due to the 'dual form of public/private patriarchal nature' (Walby, 1990) in Bangladesh. This suggests seeking the distinctive feature of gender inequality in patriarchal and matrilineal communities in relation to WID (women in development) and GAD (gender and development) perspectives, and I have been concerned not only with integrating women into development but also emphasizing equal gender relations at both the domestic and the wider societal level in Bangladesh. However women's opportunities and public participation in Bangladesh have changed significantly in recent decades. In this respect, I have noted that in the last 18 years (1991-2011) two women were simultaneously elected in a general parliamentary election. Since the 1980s, these two women have led the two major political parties in Bangladesh. During this period, the issue of women or gender development has, by consensus,

been a key issue in both the public and private spheres, and at both development partner and academic levels. It is important to bear these developments in mind when discussing the gender dimension of the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

## 9.3 Significance of research and methodology

This thesis has focused on the dynamics of gender relationships and social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh and has examined how social exclusion and inclusion influence indigenous women's personal, socio-cultural, economic and political life within their own communities and within mainstream society in Bangladesh. In order to do this, I chose the Chakma (patriarchal) and Garo (matrilineal) indigenous communities for this research and the reasons behind the selection of these two communities are that the Chakma community is one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh, whilst the Garo community has a matrilineal structure (see Chapters 5 and 7), both of which features put them in a completely separate category from mainstream society in Bangladesh. These reasons support the intention that the thesis should identify the nature of male domination over women in marginalized patriarchal and matrilineal social settings in Bangladesh.

In formulating the above aims, I was influenced by the work of Berger and Luckman (1966), and their phenomenological argument that knowledge in everyday life in society is created by the meanings and definitions of reality held by its people, where shared knowledge differs from society to society and culture to culture, as its externalized subjective meaning must attain the quality of objectivity in social reality. From this perspective, this qualitative research's ontological position is related to the idea of 'constructionism', and its epistemological position is related to the idea of 'interpretivism'. In addition, I agree with Mason (see Chapter 4) that qualitative research is interpretive, and that it reveals 'how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced' (Mason, 1996, p.4). With this understanding, this qualitative research has described the participants' interpretation and experience of the social exclusion and inclusion of Chakma and Garo indigenous people, especially the women of these communities, in Bangladesh. Concomitantly, the reality of indigenous people, especially the women of these communities, has been identified with the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of life.

In this regard, first, a pilot study was conducted to test data collection techniques, especially in relation to the draft semi-structured questionnaires. A focus group discussion (5 women from each community) was held with women of different ages (see Chapter 4), and this group discussion enhanced the results of the final semi-structured interviews that were scheduled. After this, 40 indigenous women from the Chakma and Garo communities (20 from each community) were interviewed, and 10 male members (5 from each community) were also interviewed. Participants were asked a number of semi-structured questions in the interview session (see Appendix 2). After that, interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed according to a 'thematic analysis framework'. In doing this, the analysis was divided into four chapters (Chapters 5- 8). Chapter 5 provided a discussion on the personal and socio-cultural aspects of social exclusion in terms of the marriage, identity and cultural life of indigenous women in Bangladesh. Chapter 6 dealt with the education, health and identity issues of indigenous people, especially the women of these communities in Bangladesh. Chapter 7 then identified the political issues around decision-making roles and the structural arrangements that governed the interviewees' interaction with the wider community. Finally, Chapter 8 discussed the economic aspects of social exclusion and inclusion in relation to land rights and employment and economic opportunities. Each major theme or barrier to inclusion is associated with some sub themes (see Diagrams 5.1, 6.1, 7.1 and 8.1). This process incorporates an 'inductive approach' and the epistemological positions of an 'interpretive framework'. Therefore, the concepts (themes) are derived from the actual experiences that interviewees reported in response to semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the interpretation of the political processes of exclusion and inclusion is constructed from the participants' own experiences and views. This reflects my agreement with Bryman's statement (2004) that, 'Social reality is constructed by individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and practices/experiences in the particular social context'.

Having considered the multidimensional aspects of the social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities, this thesis has provided a number of key findings that illustrate the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh.

## 9.4 Theoretical implications: gender and social exclusion/inclusion

The theoretical understanding of this research has reflected the idea of an individualistic approach, such as the capability approach (CA), where analysis indicates the individual characteristics and circumstances of a particular society. This means that the CA has shown individual rather than group outcomes. From this perspective, the analysis of exclusion has highlighted the structural characteristics of society and the situation of groups (e.g. women) that can generate processes of exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh. As I have already mentioned, empirical research on social exclusion and inclusion – that is research accomplished within the framework of the CA, along with an analysis of social exclusion and inclusion – is not commonplace in Bangladesh. Jackson (2001) stated that in many developing countries, histories of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism combine with particular gendered structures, relations and practices. Considering this, my argument in this study has considered the nature of 'women's oppression not only stemming from patriarchal attitudes but also from colonial and neo-colonial oppression' (Momsen, 1991, p.102) which fails to acknowledge the processes of social exclusion in the development model of indigenous communities, especially that of indigenous women, in Bangladesh.  Therefore, in this thesis overall discussion was constructed around the following research questions.

- What are the processes of social exclusion and inclusion for indigenous women within their own societies and mainstream society in Bangladesh?

- What are the consequences of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women within their own communities and mainstream society in Bangladesh?

During the interview sessions, participants (especially indigenous women) were asked about their personal, socio-cultural, political and economic life in Bangladesh. The responses varied according to participant's individual and community experiences. However, the majority of indigenous women had experienced inequalities and oppression in the domestic and the larger context, which were presented in the following segments.

The analysis of personal and socio-cultural aspects (see Table 5.3) of indigenous women's lives reflected that women were in a more marginalized position than male indigenous people, due to the influence of mainstream patriarchal values and socio-

cultural norms and practices in Bangladesh. Thus, indigenous women cannot control their personal lives, although these women are actively participating in their household economy. In order to theorize this context, this thesis emphasizes WID approaches where male members were seen as the heads of households and productive agents and women were seen as housewives, mothers and reproducers. Despite these facts, this research demonstrated, using Sen's idea of capabilities, where women may have relatively low entitlements in relation to their dependency, vulnerability and low degree of autonomy.

Whilst exclusion may be seen as a choice or a low degree of autonomy, the findings indicated that Chakma women are more likely to express their personal preference in their choice of a marital partner than Garo women. Garo men and women's choice of a marriage partner is controlled by their customary practice of exogamy; although some exceptions to these marriage practices were found within their community. I had anticipated finding that indigenous women did not practice remarriage except in exceptional situations, such as the death of a partner at a young age. The practice of divorce is almost absent in both communities. However, according to the Divorce Act, 2000... (Amendment of the Divorce Act, 1869), a Bengali woman can seek a divorce in cases where her husband deserts her, fails to maintain her, renounces her, or is impotent. At the same time, the findings indicate that remarriage (of female widows) exists only in unavoidable circumstances. The laws in Bangladesh protect women; but in practice female widows, especially those who are illiterate and live in rural areas, are subject to oppression by their socio-cultural practices. Therefore, indigenous women are more excluded within their household than women in wider Bangladeshi society.

According to the UNICEF IRIN reports (2009), 64 per cent of girls get married before the age of 18, which is below the legal age in Bangladesh. As a result, this thesis has claimed that Bengali women, especially rural women, are more likely to experience early marriage in comparison with urban women in Bangladesh. However, my findings revealed that in both communities, women often get married at the legal age, and the practice of dowry settlements is absent in both communities. This analysis suggests that indigenous women, especially in the matrilineal community (the Garo community), can enjoy the freedom to select their marriage

partner by themselves, which may foster social inclusion both within women's own communities and within mainstream society.

On the other hand, the issue of domestic violence is explained as part of normal conjugal conflict between husband and wife and the women do not discuss such issues publicly. As regards this issue, I have argued that indigenous women tend to cope with their intra-household conflicts by themselves, due to their lack of freedom, of decision-making rights, and of awareness of well-being. In this section, it is important to acknowledge the concept of 'cooperative conflict' (Sen, 1990) within the household, where women are often found in a disadvantageous position in relation to men. Sen argues that if a woman is seen as part of the family, then her normative entitlement share may seem automatic and inevitable for the household, because the family's entitlements come from the combined abilities of all its members to contribute to the family economy. This shows that cooperative behaviour between men and women fosters family solidarity, as well as enhancing conjugal bargaining ability at the domestic level. At the same time, Agarwal (1997) argues that, 'Women's overt compliance with social norms does not necessarily mean they have accepted the legitimacy of intra-household inequality; it might merely reflect their lack of options'. It can, in fact, be argued that women may do this because there is no space, or limited space, in which to question the intra-household distribution as one of inequality. Thus, the socio-cultural aspects of indigenous life have been revealed as supporting the theoretical argument of Sen (1999) that capability is a kind of freedom that may bring achievement in various lifestyles; but lack of personal rights and the existence of barriers in socio-cultural life challenge the process of social inclusion in Bangladesh.

The data have highlighted the limited nature of the educational qualifications (see Chapter 6) of indigenous people, especially the women of these communities. The evidence has demonstrated the finding of Shavit and Blossfeld (1993) that social inequality still persists both in education and in the labour market. As a response to this, the Government has undertaken various measures for increasing the literacy rate and access to education, especially for women. The achievements in this field have been the result of pro-active government strategies such as the female students' stipend programme at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

This programme has reinforced the processes of inclusiveness in educational attainment in Bangladesh.

Theoretically, the issue here is whether education, health and identity issues are political, social or economic aspects of social exclusion or inclusion in Bangladesh. I would argue that, in a country with absolute poverty like Bangladesh, financial incapacity is a common feature of every disadvantaged situation. Therefore, in this thesis, <u>education, health and identity </u>(see Table 6.2) were considered in a separate chapter (see Chapter 6) as other important aspects of the multiple dimensions of exclusion and inclusion. Primary education is free for all people in Bangladesh, and poor children have the opportunity to get food or cash to support their education[22]. Additionally, female children have the chance to receive a stipend up to higher secondary level. However, I would argue that there is a lack of evaluation of policy programmes concerning education in Bangladesh. My research suggests that indigenous people, especially women, are not aware of the benefits of education that are available to them, and thus they tend to fall into an excluded position. At the same time, Momsen (2010, p. 64-65) states that 'women achieve lower levels of education that men in the majority of developing countries because of distance between home and school and lack of transport, which may make it dangerous for girls to travel to school'. In addition, sometimes parents may decide not to educate their daughters due to the costs of school in terms of loss of the child labour at home as well as the financial burden of paying for school materials.

The research data have revealed that the literacy rate, particularly in higher education, is very low in almost all indigenous communities in Bangladesh in comparison to the mainstream Bangladeshi community (see Chapters 2 and 5); although, the literacy rate at primary and secondary level is better among Garo women than among Chakma women (see Table 6.1). In terms of education, the data have indicated that Garo women are more progressive in comparison to Chakma women in Bangladesh. It is, in fact, claimed by the Garo participants that the

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[22] The Food for Education (FFE) programme was designed to encourage poor families to send their children to school. It is designed to ensure that children from the poorest 40 percent of households are enrolled in formal primary schools. The Food for Education programme has been converted into Cash for Education where households with qualifying pupils receive Tk 100 per month for one pupil and Tk 125 (less than UD$2) per month if more than one pupil is enrolled. This is now a major component of the education budget, accounting for about one third of the annual development budget earmarked for primary education. This is fully financed by the Government and it is the largest conditional cash transfer programme in the country with an annual budget of about Tk 6.6 billion. By June 2001, the programme was in operation in 1,254 Unions of 464 Upazilas, with coverage of 17,811 schools. An estimated 5.5 million pupils are benefitting from this programme.

matrilineal character of their society supports Garo women in being more progressive in terms of education than other indigenous women in Bangladesh. Young (1992) argued that women's low self-esteem acts as a barrier to improving their health, education, income earning capacity etc.  Drèze and Sen (2002, pp.143-144) argued that, 'Education can also be a "catalyst of social change"- enabling people to overcome historical inequalities due to class, gender, caste, race, disability and so on'. Similarly, Momsen (2010, p.65) points out that, 'Without literacy women may not be aware of their legal rights and may be unable to benefit from opportunities for further training'.I would like to argue that access to higher education is strongly dependent on the family's financial capabilities.

In a similar way, Sen (2002b) argues that health capabilities are also instrumentally powerful for promoting development. In this study, the data suggest that indigenous communities, particularly indigenous women, are cut off and controlled not only by their traditional practices but also by structural barriers, such as distance, limited transport, the unavailability of professional doctors, financial inabilities etc. from the chance to receive available health care services from the state. The lack of equal health facilities for indigenous people also draws attention to the lack of deliberation on government health facilities in Bangladesh. It is, in fact, basic health capabilities that enhance people's ability to live long and that challenge the apathy of illness for all citizens, particularly for poor women in developing countries. Drèze and Sen observed that poor countries can still provide basic health care facilities in a low growth situation, because of the lower relative cost. They state: 'A poor economy may have less money to spend on health care and education, but it also needs less money to provide the same services, which would cost much more in the richer countries' (Drèze and Sen,  2002, p.48). However, Olivera (2005, p.1017) states that lack of transportation and health services due to conflict have also caused the majority of births to occur in the home, and complications with such pregnancies cannot be attended to by health workers.

Accordingly, the findings indicated that lack of a collective identity or recognition among indigenous people tends to create a dilemma when it comes to participation in mainstream society in Bangladesh, as it challenges the implementation of human rights in the country. In this thesis, collective identity is seen as the collective rights of indigenous people in terms of their race, language, and religion. Participants

demonstrate that indigenous people cannot experience any development without national legal recognition. Thus, indigenous people are still seeking their legal national identity to sustain their distinct cultural and social identity in Bangladesh.

In addition, empirical literature from Bangladesh suggests that when women build their own identity and become aware about social issues, claim their rights, and become more mobile and autonomous, it creates clashes between them and the dominant group, namely men (Schuler et al., 1996; Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996). Therefore, I have argued that, in the same way, having a different ethnic identity may create disagreements and an unequal relationship between Bengali and indigenous communities in Bangladesh. This means lack of citizenship or lack of self-determination, and it excludes indigenous people, especially women, from improvements to the welfare situation in Bangladesh. Similarly, the quality of indigenous women's personal identity at a domestic level produces low self-esteem, which puts them into a marginalized position at a domestic and wider societal level.

As reported in discussions of the <u>political aspects</u> (see Table 7.4) of social exclusion and inclusion, indigenous women can directly participate in all elections at the national and local levels (see Chapter 7). Considering the current political situation in Bangladesh, I would argue that women's participation at the highest level in formal politics has not meant an improvement in the position of all women, since their position could be only enhanced by taking advantage of certain specified constitutional provisions. For example: in Bangladesh, since 1991, the positions of both Prime Minster and leader of the Opposition have been held by women. But the underlying reality is that both of them have to operate within a political system that is predominantly male biased (Mahtab, 2012).  In this regard, Islam (2003) states that the power of the Prime Minister emanates from the political parties that subscribe to the traditional "masculine" political culture and values. Mahtab (2012, p.209) argues that 'they (the Prime Minster and leader of the Opposition) have to adhere to and be affiliated with prevailing political norms, and they cannot transform the existing deep-rooted political culture individually'. Thus, as an equality measure, the Constitution of Bangladesh contains a provision for a quota of women in national and local government. The number of seats reserved for women in the Parliament was increased from 30 to 45 in 2006, and these members are elected by the members of parliament for general seats. In 1997, one third of the seats for local government

members/councillors were reserved for women, who were to be elected by the direct vote of the people. This was a milestone in women's participation in the political empowerment process. The patriarchal structure of the Chakma community always prioritizes men and gives them the key positions within their traditional administrative structure, such as the position of chief, headman or *karbari*. This tendency is reflected in the structure of the interim regional and district councils in the CHT (Halim, 2007). Therefore, it could be said that Chakma women are often overlooked in the traditional and state administrative structures, which reinforce their subordinate position in society. On the other hand, since the Peace Accord, Chakma women have had a much better position in state-oriented administration than Garo and other indigenous women in Bangladesh. Data from the Garo community has shown that Garo women are almost invisible in state and community level politics, though they have traditionally had a matrilineal structure in their community. As the *chra* (maternal uncle) holds the key position in their community, the major power is indirectly controlled by patriarchal values. Theoretically this situation reflects the argument that the exclusion of women from domestic decisions challenges their ability to incorporate gender equality into the household and the community. However, nowadays indigenous women are participating in development-related activities with the support of local, national and international development organizations which promote the process of social inclusion in Bangladesh. Thus, intervention from the state and from development organizations slightly safeguards the position of Chakma women within domestic and public level decision-making in Bangladesh.

Levitas (2005) argues that political inclusiveness may be expected to deliver greater social inclusion. She also states that 'The inclusive society would be one where everyone - or every significant group - has a voice, and where these voices are heard either through representation on the basis of identity - women speak for women, black people speak for black people - or indirectly through advocacy groups or voluntary associations' (2005, p. 174). This statement illustrates that the processes of political inclusion give people, especially women, greater power over decisions and the possibility of assimilating into the dominant group through political participation. Participants stated that indigenous people, particularly women with political affiliations, had higher status within their community and mainstream society

in Bangladesh. In practice indigenous women are often excluded from the common political framework in Bangladesh. This means that their lack of political rights excludes indigenous people, especially women, from full participation in power structures and decision-making. Sen (2000, p.38) argues that 'social exclusion from political participation is itself a deprivation, and a denial of basic political freedom and civil rights directly impoverishes our lives'. Therefore, I argue that if indigenous people undermine their own capacity to participate in the political functionings of their society on equal terms with indigenous men and mainstream society, then the power relations between women and men could be balanced at the domestic and wider societal level.

Sen has argued that capabilities are 'the person's ability to do the things in question taking everything into account (including external constraints as well as internal limitations)' (Sen 2002, p.586). This argument rejects the monetary income approach as its measure of well-being, and instead focuses on indicators of the freedom to live a 'valued' life (Ruggeri Laderchi et al., 2003). In this framework, poverty is defined as deprivation in the area defined by the capability approach (CA), or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities, where 'basic capabilities' are 'the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels' (Sen, 1993, p. 41). In this thesis, the CA has shown the nature of participation and freedom and the opportunities available to indigenous women at household, community and state levels.

Finally, the last data analysis chapter (see Chapter 8) in this thesis focused on the economic situation (see Table 8.4) of indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh. The data highlighted the fact that indigenous women participate more actively in the informal labour market than mainstream rural women, whilst they tend to be excluded from the formal labour market due to socio-cultural and economic constraints. The data also suggested that the majority of indigenous women directly or indirectly contribute to their household's income, with most of them being engaged in low paid informal jobs and those who remain within the household being engaged in reproduction, child care, cooking, cleaning and other domestic activities. It can be argued that women's involvement in household maintenance and social reproduction are often ignored and excluded from the national economic contribution. Women's unpaid domestic labour and other work

help to generate exchange value or cash income for the family or national economy; but lack of cash limits women's opportunities and bargaining power at both the domestic and wider societal level. Thus, Young (1992, p.155) demonstrates that, 'Men often get privileged access to income-earning opportunities and women's contributions to both household and external labour are generally underrated; thus, men's already strong position is reinforced'.

On the same topic, Siddiqi (2009) suggests that women's contribution to the national economy is perhaps overlooked due to traditional patriarchal control. This ideological constraint reinforces male control of productive resources in Bangladesh. In addition, an unequal property inheritance system and economic dependency on men controls women's intra-household relationships too. As Guharhakurta and Begum (1995) state:

> Adivasi (indigenous) women are broadly subjected to three kinds of unequal treatment: as members of a patriarchal family, as members of a patriarchal society and as a member of a patriarchal state and nationality.

This quotation encapsulates the concept of women's subjection to fathers and brothers before marriage and to husbands, sons, and fathers-in-law after marriage (Ciotti, 2009, p.125). Therefore, Kabeer (2001) argues that the plurality of voices in women's attitude towards male consent and support hampers their ability to participate directly in labour market transactions. In this regard, Clisby et al. argue that women are likely to experience discrimination in places such as the home, the workplace and so on, not only from men but also from other women, and thus ' mothers [women] often struggle to negotiate satisfying and successful roles both in and out the home' (Clisby et al., 2007, p.22). I have shown from the data that limited work opportunities, lack of time, discrimination in the allocation of jobs, wage discrimination, unequal property inheritance rights and landlessness put indigenous women in a marginalized position both within their own communities and in mainstream society. This means that indigenous women are often the ones who opt for outside opportunities, whether or not they wish to integrate with mainstream people.

Empirical evidence from this study suggests that women's significant status as daughters, wives and mothers directly derives from their natural feminine identity (i.e.

motherhood, wifehood) and often creates their subordination and unequal position in relation to men. For example, during the field work, I observed that it is the female child who drops out of school due to financial crisis; and it is, in fact, women and daughters who eat last or who receive smaller portions of food in the distribution of food between household members.  At the same time, the findings also showed that most of the indigenous women regularly perform a substantial amount of productive work at the domestic and outside levels; and those women who remain within the household may also have informal, occasional or seasonal earnings. Thus, I argued that though indigenous women are not restricted from participation in the local labour market by their family, structural constraints control their opportunities and choices at a wider level. This analysis challenges the women in development (WID) approach where women's subordination was seen in terms of their exclusion from the market sphere, and accepts the GAD (gender and development) approach in relation to emphasizing existing gender relations in both the labour force and the reproductive sphere. Furthermore, women's multiple roles and responsibilities and normative expectations (depending on a certain set of shared assumptions about men's and women's responsibilities to each other rather than on any legal right) often create practical and strategic barriers for the development processes. Thus, I argue that women's increasing involvement in the wage economy has not ended their subordination. In such circumstances, women are enthusiastically rising to the challenge of social inclusion in Bangladesh.

This study further revealed that even in matrilineal societies, indigenous women are still subordinated to men and considered less important than male members of their family; the only difference being that inheritance and authority is passed through the women to the male of the line. This indicates that Garo men are still playing a dominant role in both public and private spheres. It is, however, a common practice/arguable issue that there is a wide divergence between the customary laws described in books and social practices. Therefore, Pearson (p.397) stated that 'giving credit to women does not diminish intra-household gender conflict or increase women's autonomy over economic activities'. For this reason, I argue that mainstream patriarchal values produce gendered subjectivity, and so indigenous women do not receive any direct recognition for their contribution to the household and national development in Bangladesh.

On this point, Sen's (1990) notion of 'cooperative conflict' suggests that the nature of human cooperation and competition in households pushes the intra-familial relationship into one of inequality. Thus, 'the relative weakness of women in cooperative conflict in one period tends to remain stable and sustain their relative weakness in the next period' (Sen, 1987, p.27). Thus, I agreed with Levitas (2005, p.229) that 'the best policies in the social exclusion strategy will have only marginal effects unless the overall problems of structural inequality is addressed'.

## 9.5 Policy implications

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this thesis, and these should be useful for policy development in Bangladesh. As I have said, Bangladesh is a country in which there is absolute poverty, so there is no debate about whether poverty exists or not. The more problematic issue is to understand the extent of that poverty and how the situation can be tackled. The results of this research demonstrate that lack of opportunities for participation are an important factor in the processes of social exclusion and inclusion in Bangladesh; although other factors are also relevant to the analysis of exclusion in indigenous communities, and these were discussed in the data analysis chapter.

To this end, this research highlights the policy gap at state level, for example in the inequality of budget distribution between the Chittagong Hill Tracts people and other minority groups in Bangladesh. This fact is represented by the following tables (Tables 9.1 and 9.2), where the figures reveal the inequality of budget distribution between the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (which is the responsibility of a parliamentary elected member) and other minority groups (i.e. those directly governed by the Prime Minister's Office).

**Table: 9.1 Budget allocations for FY 2007-08 to FY 2009-10 to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs**

| Financial year | | Non-development (US$) in million | Development (US$) in million | Total (US$) in million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007-08 | Revised Budget | 29.24 | 35.08 | 64.32 |
| 2008-09 | Revised Budget | 31.57 | 44.30 | 75.87 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2009-10 | Revised Budget | 26.13 | 37.74 | 63.87 |
| 2010-11* | Revised Budget | 29.15 | 38.09 | 67.24 |
| 2011-12* | Revised Budget | 30.48 | 39.01 | 69.49 |
| 2012-13* | Budget | 30.74 | 51.31 | 82.05 |

Source: Finance Division of Bangladesh Government

Note:

- 1 BDT = 0.0137174 USD   1 USD = 72.9000 BDT on 17th April, 2011 (Xe Universal Currency Convertor)

- *1 BDT = 0.0122459 USD, 1 USD = 81.6600 BDT on 23rd September, 2012 (Xe Universal Currency Convertor)

- Original documents attached to Appendix 3 of this thesis.

**Table: 9.2 Budget allocations for FY 2007-08 to FY 2009-10 to the Prime Minister's Office**

| Financial year | | Non-development (US$) in million | Development (US$) in million | Total (US$) in million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007-08 | Revised Budget | 14.04 | 25.33 | 39.37 |
| 2008-09 | Revised Budget | 13.24 | 26.37 | 39.61 |
| 2009-10 | Revised Budget | 20.96 | 15.14 | 36.10 |
| 2010-11* | Revised Budget | 22.36 | 48.54 | 60.90 |
| 2011-12* | Revised Budget | 21.77 | 31.78 | 53.55 |
| 2012-13* | Budget | 24.95 | 40.49 | 65.44 |

Source: Finance Division of Bangladesh Government

Note:

- 1 BDT = 0.0137363 USD   1 USD = 72.8000 BDT on 17th April, 2011 (Xe Universal Currency Convertor)

- *1 BDT = 0.0122459 USD, 1 USD = 81.6600 BDT on 23rd September, 2012 (Xe Universal Currency Convertor)

- Original documents attached to Appendix 3 of this thesis.

The above tables show that the budget allocated to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs is almost 69.49 million (US$) and this budget is allotted for only 12 indigenous groups who are concentrated in the CHT areas in Bangladesh. At the same time, the data (see Table 9. 2) show that a smaller sum of almost 53.55 million (US$) was allotted for FY 2011-2012 to the Prime Minister's Office, which deals with another 33 indigenous communities in Bangladesh, along with other affairs and activities (see Appendix 3). These government statistics have shown that the budget allocated to minority groups in Bangladesh is not equally distributed between these groups (see Table 9.1 & 9.2). It is in this context that the policy and strategies for poverty reduction in Bangladesh should be viewed. In this regard, I have argued that Garo indigenous women's position is more vulnerable than that of Chakma indigenous women, due to recognition of the latter in government policy documents.

Apart from discrimination in making budgetary allocations, state policy makers do not recognize the Garo indigenous people, especially the women, in the local government structure, even though at least one Chakma woman has been selected to participate in local government. Finally, this thesis challenges the limitations of traditional policy-making in Bangladesh, in that it has approached the notion of social exclusion and inclusion as a matter for social policy rather than something to be considered only in a theoretical way. Thus, the findings have led me to claim that the processes of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous people, especially women, need to be addressed in policy documents, as creating appropriate policy tools would be the best way of spreading – rather than imposing – the basic shared values and standards necessary to give a sense of inclusion to all the people of Bangladesh.

## 9.6   Recommendations

Development has not always brought greater freedom for women and in many cases women are now expected to carry the double burden of both reproductive and productive tasks (Momsen, 2010, p.48). Thus, in order to improve the overall situation of indigenous communities in Bangladesh, I would like to make some recommendations for indigenous communities, particularly for indigenous women, to increase the processes of social inclusion in Bangladesh.

First, indigenous people's collective identity needs to be recognized in the Constitution by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). In this respect, the Government should have implemented the international provisions of the ILO and United Nations conventions on human rights, and constitutionally guaranteed these people's rights. The Government has already established a National Human Rights Commission under the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2007, to deal with all human rights issues.  According to the constitution of Bangladesh, 'all citizens are equal before the law' and entitled to equal protection by the law (article 27), but unfortunately the GOB's policies tend to discriminate against and exclude indigenous people. Therefore, to promote inclusionary processes with regard to indigenous people, especially women, their right to collective identify and self-determination should be constitutionally recognized. In order to promote the rights and dignities of indigenous people, especially women, all citizens must abide by the Constitution and other international conventions.

Secondly, the government should promote the concept of equality among indigenous people, especially the women of these communities, in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is essential to consider all disadvantaged women equally in every policy development programme such as education, employment and economic opportunities, political participation, social security and so on. In this way, the traditional gender norms would be challenged at grass roots level. The Government has already initiated various polices and strategies for women's development in Bangladesh; but as I have argued, the policies and budgetary systems devised do not cover the all indigenous communities, especially all indigenous women in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, gender awareness should be raised at both domestic and wider societal levels. Bengali women, especially in rural areas, need to be included in domestic and community level decisions to reduce the gender gap. It could be argued that there are no specific targets for increasing women's participation in all forms of decision-making. This requires not only increasing access to facilities and services but also challenging traditional attitudes in order to enhance community and family investment in improving female education and health outcomes.

Fourth, policy makers need to reinforce the capacity of indigenous women to overcome structural barriers, e.g. in education, political participation, employment and opportunities, which often limit women's participation in mainstream society. In

this regard, the Government should take steps to remove institutional barriers (such as administrative inadequacy, weakness in the enforcement of national laws, and lack of monitoring processes for equal rights and opportunities) and increase the social inclusion process among these groups. Also, the Government needs to empower these women through a comprehensive gender action plan, which might be able to challenge the overall exclusionary processes in Bangladesh.

Fifth, the Government should provide equal opportunities to all indigenous women in local and national level politics and the labour market in Bangladesh. It has been pointed out that only one Chakma woman has been nominated to a regional council, which has so far failed to produce any positive result for these women. For this reason, I would like to recommend that indigenous women be integrated into local and national politics alongside mainstream women.

Sixth, the Government should undertake joint collaborative initiatives with international development agencies and NGOs to promote effective development polices for all indigenous communities in Bangladesh. This might produce better implementation of policies, rights and opportunities for these communities.

Overall, then, it is necessary to acknowledge the economic contribution of indigenous people, especially the women, in the country's policy documents. As has been mentioned, indigenous women are now more likely to engage in the local labour market, which enhances their financial capacity and household economic situation. Recognition of such activities could encourage other women's participation in income-generating activities, which would promote the social inclusion process in Bangladesh. In this way, indigenous women's economic rights and proper implementation of labour policy could be facilitated in Bangladesh.

At the end of this research, I would like to say that although it is important to focus on policy related to such issues, a big part of the problem seems to be that policies do not always translate into positive changes in practice. In these circumstances, it may be convenient to increase awareness by means of education, and to emphasise community-specific problems in the local implementation of policies in Bangladesh.

## 9.7 Conclusions

This study has explored indigenous people's, particularly indigenous women's, experiences of social exclusion and inclusion in the context of patriarchal and

matrilineal communities as well as at the wider societal level, and it has revealed how these processes affect their activities in pursuit of developing their capabilities. I conclude that indigenous people, especially indigenous women, are subject to processes of social exclusion; and the exclusionary processes have been largely shaped by structural and ideological inequalities within their own societies and within mainstream society.

This thesis highlights the fact that woman in matrilineal society (Garo women) could be considered equal to men, not superior to men, in domestic decision-making processes, which challenges conventional ideas about matrilineal society among the wider Bengali population. As I have discussed, the Garo matrilineal system traces a person's lineage through their maternal ancestors, and land is inherited through the mother's lineage by the eldest daughter. This gives some (but far from all) Garo women certain powers to make decisions for their intra-household financial and non-financial concerns (e.g. marriage, childcare, education, etc) along with Garo men. However, I have argued that Garo people, especially Garo men, do not always actively practice the matrilineal customary laws, in order that they may replicate the patriarchal values of wider society. On the other hand, the data revealed that Chakma women have less control over the household economy, though they play an equal role with Chakma men in making intra-household expenditure and other non-financial decisions. This finding demonstrates that women in both communities try to balance their 'power and control' relationship in terms of decision-making at the domestic and wider societal levels. Similarly, this study found that indigenous women have limited choice in education, health, and the labour market and earn less in comparison to indigenous men in similar kinds of work.

Therefore, I can conclude that women in these communities are faced with the 'triple burden' of being indigenous, female and poor, which pushes them into marginalized, inferior and vulnerable positions at the domestic and wider societal levels in Bangladesh. It can, in fact, be argued that the multidimensional exclusionary processes restrict indigenous women's capacity at the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic levels, which negatively impacts on their individual and community well being. This means that indigenous women are subject to the processes of social exclusion that result from unequal distribution of resources, capabilities and rights, and from other deprivations, which compared to indigenous

men and to mainstream Bengali people, at the domestic level and at the wider societal level. Therefore, I argue that indigenous women's matrilineal or patriarchal lineage does not support them in freeing themselves from the deprivations of life in Bangladesh. I might even say that it is actually quite challenging to separate the processes from the consequences of social exclusion and inclusion of indigenous women in Bangladesh.

This study acknowledges that the Government could argue that there are polices in existence which increase women's capabilities, such as poverty reduction strategies (PRS), safety net programmes (SNP), female secondary stipend programmes, food or cash for education, and so on. But my argument is about whether members of the indigenous population, especially women, have considered the practical implications of these state policies. The majority of the participants stated that they did not have any detailed knowledge about such state policies. Similarly, it can be argued that the equality provision (Articles 27 and 28, see Chapter 2) of the Bangladesh Constitution ensures 'gender equality' in the public sphere for all citizens, but this does not explicitly include the personal and family spheres. It is, in fact, the intervention of religious personal laws that often restricts women's participation in the public sphere, either directly or indirectly, with regard to religion, race, caste and sex. In fact, some participants informed me that these notions were new to them. This indicates that it is not enough just to say there are policies and services to enhance the inclusiveness of women in development: these should be implemented explicitly for all vulnerable women in Bangladesh. Otherwise, women can do little against these exclusions; and it is important to improve their capabilities to bring about individual and community well-being in Bangladesh.

Finally, I conclude that the processes of social exclusion are relational and discursive, and they need to be addressed in the development process as an alternative discourse for combating poverty in Bangladesh. I hope this thesis will encourage researchers and academics studying poverty to conduct gender-based policy research in Bangladesh, bringing in the experiences of individuals and communities in these people's own words

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# Appendixes
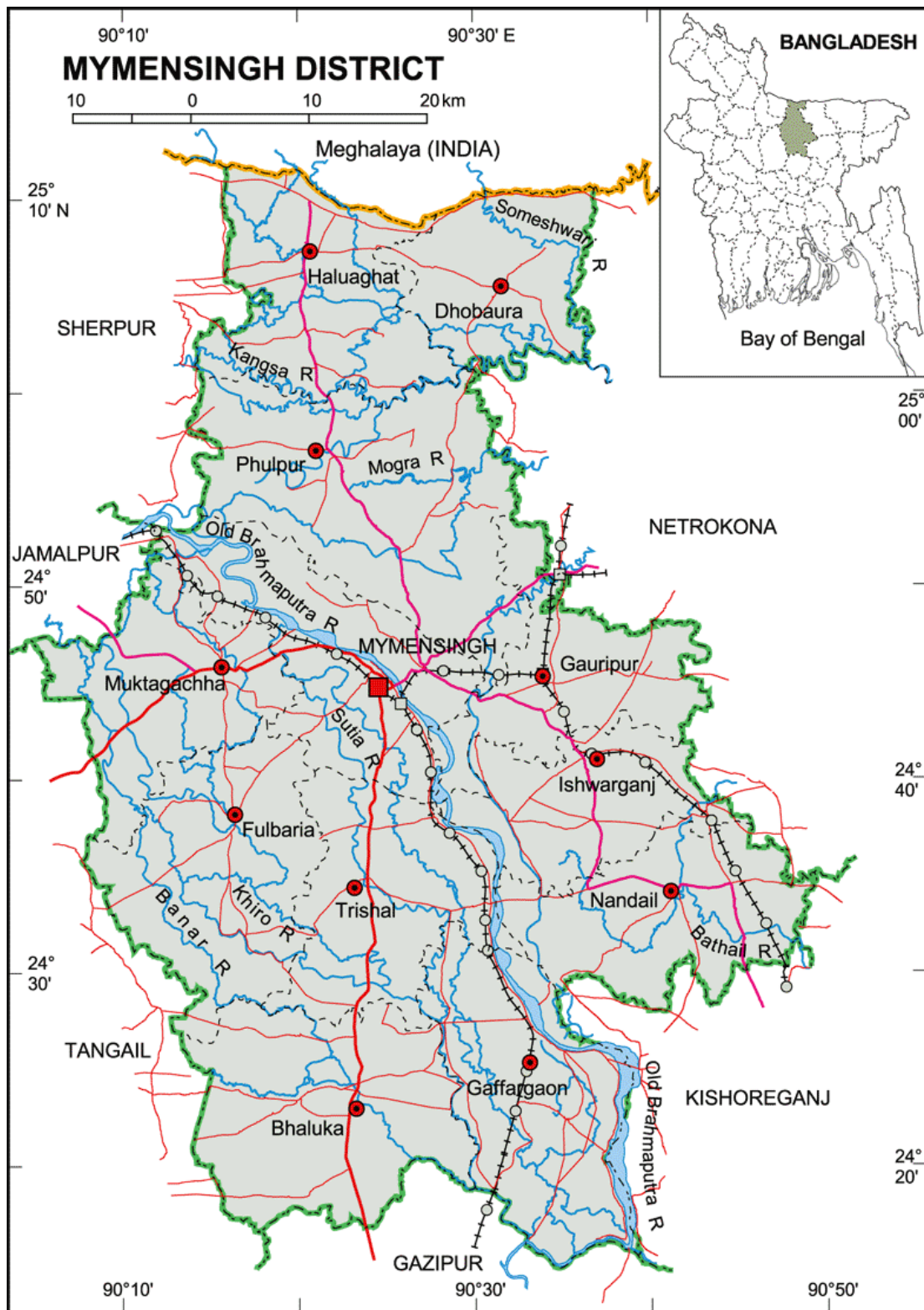
# Appendix 1

Figure: Map of Bangladesh

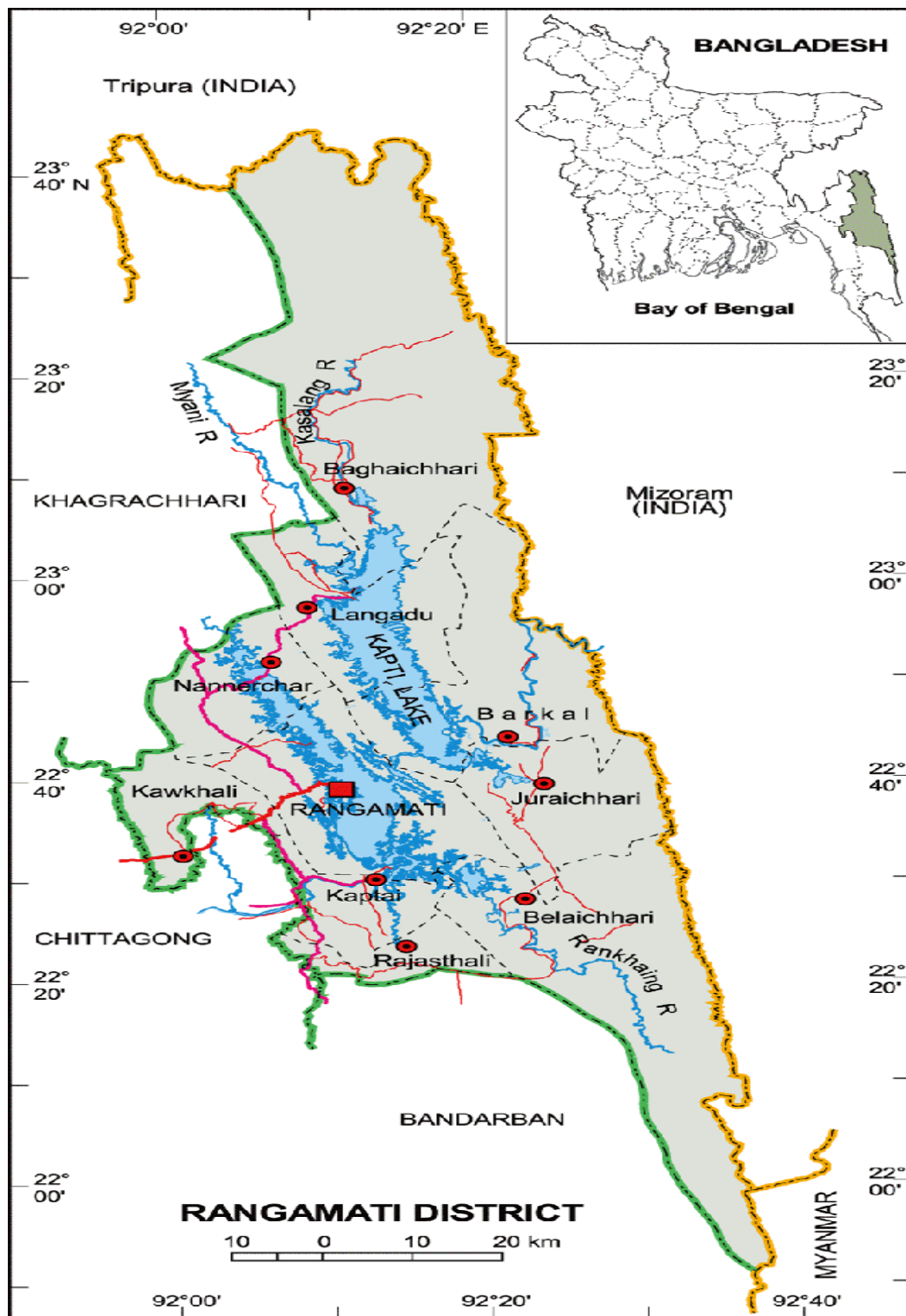Figure: Map of Mymensingh distrct in Bangladesh

Figure: Map of Rangamati distrct in Bangladesh

# Appendix 2

Date

To

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Bangladesh.


Subject: Letter for seeking help to conduct an academic research.

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I am a PhD research student of the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. I am going to conduct an academic research for my PhD degree with indigenous people, especially women of two particular communities, in Bangladesh.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the position of women in patriarchal and matrilineal society in Bangladesh and to identify the experiences of social exclusion of women in marginalized communities in the context of a country with absolute poverty. In doing so, my attempt is to investigate two minority communities in Bangladesh i.e. "Chakma community" and "Garo community". For further information about this research, please see the attached information sheet with this letter.

In order to collect the data for my research, I am seeking your help to communicate with these indigenous people at the first phase. I ensured to you that all information conveyed by participants will be kept confidential.

I hope you would receive my request positively and help me to carrying this research with your kind co-operation.


Best regard,


Soniya Wazed
IASS, University of Birmingham
United Kingdom.

# RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

## TITLE OF PROJECT

## Gender and social exclusion/inclusion : a study of indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

### WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

This study is looking at how indigenous people, especially the women of the Chakma and Garo communities, experience social exclusion within their own communities and also within mainstream society. This will be carried out through an investigation of their personal, socio-cultural, political and economic life

### WHAT WILL I HAVE TO DO?

I shall need to fill out a semi-structured questionnaire that includes questions, all of which are relevant to the research. Before answering these questions, research participants will be informed clearly about all aspects of the research.

### IS THERE ANY RISK FOR ME IF I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?

This research is not intended to cause you any direct or indirect harm e.g. psychological distress, or discomfort, social disadvantage, or physical injury. However, in the case of sharing difficult experiences within their own communities and within their families, there is a possibility that women may become anxious, stressed, or depressed. In such circumstances, participants can pause at any time during the interview; and if they want, they may take up the discussion again at another suitable time.

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE AND/OR BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH?

The study is expected to benefit its indigenous subjects at the local level by disseminating the information – personal and community – that will be gathered through field interviews to local (and if necessary, national) policy makers. This information may enable policy makers and development workers to consider better policies and practices in relation to indigenous people, especially women.

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## WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TO TAKE PART OR DECIDE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You are free to choose whether to take part in this research, and you are free to withdraw, without any adverse consequences, during a defined period after your participation (4 weeks, in order to prevent inclusion of your input in the analysis).

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION?

All information given during the interviews will be dealt with and kept safely in a private or locked place. Only I (the researcher) will have access to the interview schedule, and this interview schedule will be destroyed after completion of the data analysis. In addition, the results will definitely be published only for academic purposes (PhD thesis) and will not be used elsewhere in the future

## HOW DO I ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY?

All documents, checklists, recorders, cameras and other research instruments will be used only with the prior permission of participants. All information conveyed by participants will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone other than the researcher. To respect the privacy of respondents, their names and addresses will not be recorded anywhere in the study report. Finally participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the report at any point where I quote particular experiences described by them.

## WHAT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR DO NOT UNDERSTAND SOMETHING?

If you do not understand something, first I apologise for this, because it may be that I haven't explained it properly! You may interrupt any time during the interview, and please feel free to ask any questions at any time.

## WILL THE STUDY COST ANYTHING?

No, the study will not cost you anything, and your participation is voluntary.

If you have any concerns about the study and wish to communicate with someone independent, you can contact:

**Institute of Applied Social Sciences (IASS)**
**University of Birmingham**
**Edgbaston**
**Birmingham B15 2TT**
**United Kingdom.**

# গবেষনার প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাবলী

**গবেষনা প্রকল্পের নাম ঃ**

জেন্ডার (নারী), দারিদ্র এবং সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধকতা/আন্তর্ভূক্তিকরণঃ বাংলাদেশের আদিবাসী সম্প্রদায়।

**গবেষনার বিষয়বস্তু ঃ**

এই গবেষনাটি বাংলাদেশের আদিবাসী জনগনের, মূলত/বিশেষত চাকমা ও গারো আদিবাসী গোষ্ঠীর মহিলারা কিভাবে গোষ্ঠীগত এবং রাষ্ট্রীয় পর্যায়ে সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধকতার সমুক্ষীন হয় তা পর্যবেক্ষন করার উদ্দেশ্যে প্রনোদিত। এই গবেষনার মাধ্যমে নির্দিষ্ট আদিবাসী গোষ্ঠীর ব্যক্তিগত, সাংস্কৃতিক, সামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক এবং অর্থনৈতিক জীবন ধারা তুলে ধরার চেষ্টা করা হবে।

**আমাকে কি করতে হবে ঃ**

আমাকে একটি প্রাথমিক গবেষনা প্রশ্ন মালা পূরণ করতে হবে, যার মধ্যে গবেষনা সম্পর্কিত সম্ভাব্য সকল প্রশ্ন থাকবে। যদিও গবেষনায় অংশগ্রহণকারী সকলকে গবেষনার বিষয়বস্তু সম্পর্কে পূর্বেই পরিপূর্ণ ধারণা দেওয়া হবে।

**গবেষনায় অংশগ্রহণে কোন ধরণের ঝুঁকি আছে কি না ?**

এই গবেষনায় অন্তর্ভূক্তিকরণের ফলে আদিবাসী জনগোষ্ঠীর কোন ধরণের ব্যক্তিগত অর্থাৎ মানসিক অস্বাচ্ছদ্দ্যকর পরিস্থিতি, সামাজিক দুর্দশা বা শারীরিক বিঘ্ন/ক্ষতি হবে না। যেহেতু, এই গবেষনাটি আদিবাসী জীবন ধারার বিভিন্ন গোষ্ঠীগত এবং পারিবারিক সমস্যার নানা বিষয়ের তথ্য সংগ্রহের উদ্দেশ্যে প্রণোদিত হবে, সেহেতু ক্ষেত্র বিশেষে আদিবাসী নারীরা তাদের ব্যক্তিগত জীবনের অভিজ্ঞতা প্রকাশ করার সময় আবেগময় বা উদ্বিগ্ন হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা থাকে। এই ধরণের পরিস্থিতিতে, অংশগ্রহণকারী তাদের প্রয়োজনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে গবেষনা কার্যটির স্থগিত রাখতে পারবেন অথবা তিনি সাক্ষাৎকার দেওয়ার জন্য পুনরায় তার সুবিধাজনক সময় নির্বাচন করতে পারবেন।

**গবেষনার সম্ভাব্য সুবিধা সমূহ ঃ**

এই গবেষনা কার্যটি আদিবাসী জনগণের গোষ্ঠীগত জীবন ধারার সঠিক চিত্র তুলে ধরা হবে, এই মর্মে স্থানীয় আদিবাসী জনগণের সরাসরি সাক্ষাৎকার বিশেষত চাকমা ও গারো নারীদের সরাসরি সাক্ষাৎকার নেওয়া হবে। এছাড়া নির্দিষ্ট আদিবাসী গোষ্ঠীর স্থানীয় নেতা/নেত্রী (ক্ষেত্র বিশেষে রাষ্ট্রীয় পর্যায়ে নেতা/নেত্রী) এবং কিছু পুরুষ আদিবাসী জনগণের সাক্ষাৎকার নেওয়া হবে। এছাড়া এই গবেষনাটি সরকারি অথবা বে-সরকারি পর্যায়ের বাংলাদেশের আদিবাসী গোষ্ঠীর বিশেষত আদিবাসী নারীর জীবনের উন্নয়ন নীতি প্রণয়নের ক্ষেত্রে সহায়ক ভূমিকা পালন করবে বলে আশা প্রকাশ করছি।

## গবেষনা কার্যে অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে অসম্মতি বা মতামত প্রত্যাহারের অধিকার ঃ

এই গবেষনায় অংশগ্রহণ সম্পূর্ণরূপে অংশগ্রহণকারীর নিজ ইচ্ছার/স্বদিচ্ছায় বিবেচ্য বিষয় এবং অংশগ্রহণকারী সাক্ষাৎকার দেওয়ার (৪ সপ্তাহের মধ্যে) চাইলে তার দেওয়া সকল তথ্য প্রত্যাহার করতে পারবেন। এই ক্ষেত্রে অংশগ্রহণক-রীকে কোন ধরণের বাঁধা বা প্রতিকূল পরিস্থিতির মোকাবিলা করতে হবে না।

## তথ্য সংরক্ষনের পদ্ধতি ঃ

অংশগ্রহণকারী ব্যক্তিগত নিরাপত্তা রক্ষার জন্য তথ্যাবলী প্রকাশের ক্ষেত্রে অংশ-গ্রহণকারীর আসল নাম ও ঠিকানা গবেষনা প্রতিবেদনে কোথাও ব্যবহৃত হবে না। এই মর্মে গবেষনা প্রতিবেদনে অংশগ্রহণকারী সকল তথ্য বিশেণ্টষনের ক্ষেত্রে ছদ্মনাম দেওয়া হবে।

## তথ্যগুলি কিভাবে ব্যবহার হবে ঃ

গবেষনা কার্যে ব্যবহৃত সকল দলিলপত্র, নকশা এবং প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবহৃত দ্রব্যসমূহ (যথাঃ রেকর্ডার, ক্যামেরা বা অন্যান্য দ্রব্যাদি) অংশ-গ্রহণকারী পূর্ব অনুমতিক্রমে ব্যবহৃত হবে। সকল প্রকার তথ্যাবলী পূর্ণ গোপনীয়তার সহিত নিরাপদে সংরক্ষিত হবে এবং কেবলমাত্র গবেষক এই তথ্যাবলী প্রত্যক্ষভাবে সংগৃহীত করবে। এছাড়া জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, গবেষনার সংগৃহীত তথ্যাবলী বর্তমানে কেবলমাত্র উচ্চতর শিক্ষা, গবেষনা কার্য এবং ভবিষ্যতে বিভিন্ন প্রতিবেদনরূপে প্রকাশিত হতে পারে।

## যদি কিছু বুঝতে অসুবিধা হয় ঃ

প্রথমত, যদি গবেষনার বিষয়বস্ত বুঝতে আপনার কোন অসুবিধা হয়, তাহলে আমি গভীরভাবে দুঃখিত। কারণ আমি হয়তো সঠিকভাবে আপনাকে এই কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কে ধারণা দিতে পারি নাই। এই ক্ষেত্রে গবেষনা চলাকালীন সময়ে যে কোন ধরণের প্রশ্নের সম্মুখীন হলে, আপনি আমাকে সাবলীলভাবে জিজ্ঞাসা করতে পারবেন।

## গবেষনা কার্যক্রমটি কি ব্যয় সাপেক্ষ ঃ

এই গবেষনা কার্যক্রমে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আপনাকে কোন ধরণের অর্থ ব্যয় করতে হবে না এবং এখানে আপনার অংশগ্রহণ সম্পূর্ণভাবে ইচ্ছাকৃত।

যদি আপনি এই গবেষনা সম্পর্কে কোন কিছু যাচাই করতে চান তবে নিম্নের ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগ করতে পারেনঃ-

**Institute of Applied Social Sciences (IASS)**
**University of Birmingham**
**Edgbaston**
**Birmingham B15 2TT**

# CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:**

Gender, Poverty and Social exclusion/inclusion: A study of indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

**Name of Researcher:**

SONIYA WAZED

**Address and Telephone Number of Researcher:-**
Institute of Applied Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Phone:
Email:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the 'Essential Information sheet' for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

                    YES/NO

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without having to give any reason.

                    YES/NO

3. I agree to take part in the above study.                    YES/NO

_____        _____        _____ _____
Name of Research Participant        Age                    Signature                    Date

*If any participants are unable to provide written consent in the form of signature please ensure that a third party to sign on their behalf and/or to stab the thumb-mark below.*

5. I have read the terms above and agree with them in full.                    YES/NO

_____                                        _____

Name of person (s) providing consent                                Signature

## Interview schedule

**Name (which will be anonymous):**

**Place**          **Time**                    **Date**

All the information that you give us is completely confidential. You will not be identified in any way in the reporting of the results. We need your name (beginning) solely for monitoring purposes to ensure that the interview schedule been completed by a member of Chakma and Garo communities in Bangladesh. By signing below you are agreeing that you have read and understood the purpose of the research and that you agree to take part in this research study.

Please answer all the questions.

_____

Participant's signature                                    Date

**Section: A:          Background information of the participants**

- Age :

- Religion:

- Identity:

- Types of house ( owned/rented/ leased)

- Types of Family:

-  Number of family member:

- Place of Origin**/** Home District:

- How long have you been living in this place?

- How did you move from your original place to Bangladesh? And why?


**Section: B  Language, Dress Pattern and Recreations**

a)  What is your native language? Can you speak in Bengali?

b)  What is your casual dress? Is there any special dress do you need to wear in your special occasions?

c)  How do you spend your leisure time?

d)  What types of activities do you do for your recreations?


**Section: C          Expériences social exclusion**

**Part: 1          Mariage system**

a) At what age does a girl usually marry in your community? What was your age at marriage?

b) Whose decision is vital in respect of your marriage? And why?

c) What type of marriage do you prefer? Do you share your views with your family to select your partner?

d) How do you select your partner? What are the characteristics you may look when you select your partner?

e) Do you know about the marriage registration? Where do you get married?

f) Do you need to pay dowry? If yes, what type of dowry you need to pay?

## Part: 2    Education

a) What is your level of education?

b) Do your children go to school? If no, why?

c) Do you know about free primary education from Government or Non-Formal Primary Education Program (NFPE)?

d) Do you know that government is providing free Higher Secondary education along with stipend for poorest female students? If yes, have you applied for it? What was the result?

## Part: 3    Employments and Income

a) What type of work you and/or your husband do?

b) Is there any wage difference between men and women in terms of similar jobs/occupation in your workplace?

c) Do you have opportunity to participate in labour market with Bangladeshi society? If yes, what type of experience do you have?

d) Do you have any opportunity to get loan from Government Bank or Private sector like micro credit programme? If yes, where? Have you applied for any type of loan? What was the result?

**Part: 4 A    Gender relationships**

a) What types of everyday (and other) activities do you engage in within the household, and outside? How do you feel about this?

b) What is your husband's role in your household? How do you feel about this?

c) Who makes all the major decision in your family? And why?

d) Do you share your views with your family in your household affairs, especially decision making in terms of domestic labour, paid work, child care, education, dress pattern and social mobility?

e) Does your husband/family respect your opinion when it comes to make a decision for your family?

f) Do you experience any kind of gender inequality in terms of education, food distribution, intra household work and daily expenditure within your households? If yes, how do you experience it?

**Part 4B: Male perception (Question for male respondent)**

a) What types of everyday (and other) activities do you engage in within the household, and outside? How do you feel about this?

b) W hat is your wife's role in your household? How do you feel about this?

c) What influences has contact with main Bangladeshi groups and institutions made to your community and your life? Is there any changes have taken places in case of influence of Bangladeshi society? If yes, what type of changes?

**Section: D  Causes of social exclusion**

1. Do you own any property? Is there any difference between men and women in property rights in your community? If yes, what? Have you experienced any kind of discrimination about the property rights from your family?

2. Does your community perform/arrange any particular or special social and cultural activity or ceremony? If yes, what are those? How do local people (mainstream society) treat these activities? Do they participate with this occasion? If not, why?

3. Do you participate in any kind of social/cultural activities with majority society in Bangladesh? If yes, what kind of social/cultural activities?

4. Is there any obstacle if you want to move from current place to another place within Bangladesh? If yes, what type of obstacle do you face?

5. Where do you get treatment when you fall in sick? Do you have access to government health facilities? What kind of facilities have you received from Government hospital? Have you experienced any inconvenience service from the government hospitals? If yes, when and why?

6. Are you aware of the birth registration system? If yes, have you applied for birth registration for your children? How did you end up with this process?

7. Do you have any restriction for social mobility within your community? If no, why? Have you faced any type of violence?  If yes, when and what type of violence did you faced?

8. Can you seek for legal assistance/ judiciary services to resolve any kind of internal and external difficulties? If yes, what types of services did you received from legal authorities? If no, how do you solve your problem? Have you or any other people you know been involved in any legal cases in your community? What was the result?

9. Did you cast vote in last local and general election in Bangladesh? If no, why?

10. Do you have national identity card? If not, why? Have you applied for National ID registration? If not why? If yes, what was the result?

11. What influences has contact with main Bangladeshi groups and institutions made to your community and your life? Is there any changes have taken places in case of influence of majority society in Bangladesh? If yes, what type of changes?

12. Are there any particular issue/ problem for women you may want to address/discuss in your community? If yes, what?


**Section: E:          Policy**


a) What type of coping strategies do you practice in your daily livelihoods?


b) What type of support and services would help to improve your quality of life?


**Thank you very much for your kind participation in this research project**

## Section 1: Background

- Name

- Name of organization you belong to

- Occupation

## Section 2: Policy issues

1. What kinds of development programs are run by this organization?

2. How long have your organization been operating in this sectors?

3. Does your organization collaborate with other sectors like private, public or, voluntary organization?

4. Who are the target group of the program run by this organization?

5. What do you think about Chakma and Garo community life?

6. Is there any existing development policy to improve their quality of life?

   a) If yes, what types of polices are applied for their improvement?

   b) If no, what recommendation you may want to advise to improve their current situation?

**Thank you very much for your kind cooperation for this research project**

# INTERVIEW SCHDULE

নাম (পরবর্তীতে ছদ্মনাম দেওয়া হবে)

স্থান ঃ                     সময় ঃ                     তারিখ ঃ

উত্তরদাতা আমার সাথে যে সমস্ড় আলোচনা বা মত বিনিময় করবেন তা সম্পূর্ণভাবে গোপন রাখা হবে। উত্তরদাতার পরিচিতি এই রিপোর্টের কোনো আলোচনায় বা বিবরণে কেউ চিহ্নিত করতে পারবে না। উত্তরদাতার নাম, ঠিকানা নেয়া হচ্ছে কেবলমাত্র গবেষণা কাজের উদ্দেশ্য সম্পর্কে সম্পূর্ণ রূপে অবগত আছেন এবং স্বদিচ্ছায় এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে রাজী আছেন। তবে গবেষণা কার্য চলাকালীন যে কোনো সময়ে আপনার মত পরিবর্তন করার পূর্ণ স্বাধীনতা রয়েছে। এছাড়া কোনো ধরনের সমস্যা হলে আপনি গবেষণায় প্রদত্ত তথ্য ব্যবহার না করার জন্য গবেষককে নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে জানাতে পারবেন। আমি গবেষক হিসেবে আপনাদের প্রদত্ত তথ্য গবেষণা কার্যে ব্যবহার না করার পূর্ণ নিশ্চয়তা প্রদান করছি।

সকল প্রশ্নের উত্তর প্রদানের জন্য অনুরোধ করছি।

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উত্তরদাতার স্বাক্ষর                     তারিখ

**সেকশন     A            উত্তরদাতার পরিচিতি**

- বয়স :  [            ]

- ধর্ম :

- গোত্র পরিচয় :

- নাগরিকত্ব :

- বাড়ীর ধরন : নিজ / ভাড়া / বন্ধকী

- পরিবারের ধরন : একক / যৌথ / অন্যান্য

- পরিবারের সদস্য সংখ্যা : [      ]

- পুরুষ [     ]      মহিলা [     ]      নির্ভরশীল [     ]

- নিজ জন্মস্থান :

- পূর্ব পুরুষের জন্মস্থান :

- কতদিন যাবৎ এখানে বসবাস করছেন?

- আপনারা কিভাবে নিজ দেশ হতে স্থানান্তর হয়েছিলেন এবং কেন?

## সেকশন B : Language, Dress Pattern and Recreations.

১. আপনি দৈনন্দিন জীবনে কোন ভাষায় কথা বলেন? আপনি কি বাংলা বলতে বা লিখতে পারেন?

২. সাধারণত আপনারা কোন ধরনের পোশাক পরিধান করে থাকেন? বিশেষ দিন গুলিতে বা ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানে আপনাদের কি কোন নির্দিষ্ট পোশাক পরিধান করতে হয়।

৩. আপনি কিভাবে অবসর সময় কাটান?

৪. বিনোদনের জন্য আপনি কি কি করেন?

**সেকশন C: Experiences of Social Exclusion**

**Part-1**

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### বিবাহের ধরন

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১. আপনি আপনার সমাজে মেয়েরা সাধারণত কত বছর বয়সে বিবাহ বন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়? আপনার বিয়ের সময় বয়স কত ছিল?

২. আপনার বিয়ের ব্যাপারে কার সিদ্ধান্ড সবচেয়ে প্রাধান্য দিয়েছেন এবং কেন?

৩. আপনি কোন ধরনের বিবাহ পছন্দ করেন? বিবাহের সময় সঙ্গী নির্বাচনের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি আপনার মতামত পরিবারের সাথে আলোচনা করতে পারেন বা করেছিলেন?

৪. কিভাবে আপনি সঙ্গী নির্বাচন করেছেন? সঙ্গী নির্বাচনের সময় আপনি সঙ্গীর কি কি বৈশিষ্ট্য থাকা প্রয়োজন বলে মনে করেন?

৫. আপনি কি বিবাহ নিবন্ধের কথা জানেন? আপনারা কোথায় এবং কাকে স্বাক্ষী রেখে বিয়ে করে থাকেন?

৬. আপনাদের সমাজে কি যৌতুক প্রথা প্রচলিত আছে? যদি থাকে তাহলে আপনারা কোন ধরনের যৌতুক দিয়ে থাকেন?

৭. আপনাদের বিয়ের রীতিনীতি সম্পর্কে কিছু বলেন?

**Part-2**

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### শিক্ষা

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১. আপনার শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা কতটুকু?

২. আপনার সন্ড্রনেরা কি স্কুলে যায়? যদি না যায় তাহলে কেন?

৩. আপনি কি সরকার পরিচালিত বিনমূল্যে প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা অথবা অনানুষ্ঠানিক প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা কার্যক্রম (এন.এফ.পি.ই) সম্পর্কে জানেন?

৪. আপনি কি জানেন সরকার বিনামূল্যে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক পর্যন্ড পড়াশুনার সুযোগ দিয়েছে এবং সেই সাথে গরীব ছাত্রীদের বৃত্তি দিয়ে থাকে? যদি জেনে থাকেন তাহলে কি কখনো বৃত্তির জন্য আবেদন করেছেন? এর ফলাফল কি হয়েছে?

**Part-3**

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কর্মসংস্থান ও আয়

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১. আপনি এবং আপনার স্বামীর আয়ের উৎস কি?

২. একই ধরনের চাকুরী বা কাজের ক্ষেত্রে নারী বা পুরুষ হিসেবে পারিশ্রমিক বা বেতনের ক্ষেত্রে কি বৈষম্যেও শিকার হয়েছেন?

৩. কাজের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি বাংলাদেশীয়দের সাথে একত্রে কাজ করার সুযোগ পান? যদি হ্যা হয়, তাহলে আপনার কোনো অভিজ্ঞতা তুলে ধরবেন কি?

৪. সরকারী ব্যাংক অথবা বেসরকারী যেমন ক্ষুদ্র ঋণ প্রকল্প হতে আপনারা কি ঋণ নিতে পারেন? যদি হ্যা হয়, তাহলে কি লোনের জন্য কোথাও/কখনো আবেদন করেছিলেন এবং এর ফলাফল কি ছিল?

# Part-4 (A)

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## Gender Relationship

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১. দৈনন্দিন জীবনে/গৃহস্থলীতে আপনি কি ধরনের কাজ করে থাকেন? এই ধরনের কাজ করতে আপনার কেমন লাগে?

২. আপনার পরিবারের মধ্যে স্বামীর/পুরুষের ভূমিকা কি? এই ক্ষেত্রে আপনার মতামত কি?

৩. আপনি কি পারিবারিক বিষয় যেমন : গৃহস্থলীর কাজকর্ম, চাকুরী/আয়, সন্তান লালন-পালন, শিক্ষা, পোশাক পরিচ্ছেদের ধরন এবং সামাজিক চলাফেরা ইত্যাদির ক্ষেত্রে আপনার পরিবারের অন্যান্য সদস্যদের সাথে আপনার নিজস্ব মতামত করে থাকেন?

৪. আপনার স্বামী বা পরিবারের অন্যান্য সদস্যরা উপরোক্ত বিষয়ে কোন সিদ্ধান্ড গ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে আপনার মতামতে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে থাকে কি?

৫. শিক্ষা, খাবার বণ্টন, গৃহস্থলীর কাজ এবং দৈনন্দিন আয়-ব্যয়ের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি একজন মেয়ে/মহিলা হওয়ার জন্য কোনো ধরনের বৈষম্যের শিকার হয়েছেন? যদি হয়ে থাকেন কিভাবে হয়েছেন?

**সেকশন D**

১. আপনার কি কোন নিজস্ব সম্পত্তি আছে? আপনার সমাজে সম্পত্তি অধিকারের ক্ষেত্রে নারী/পুরুষের কোনো ধরনের বৈষম্য আছে কি? যদি থাকে, তা কি ধরনের বৈষম্য সৃষ্টি করে। পরিবারের মধ্যে সম্পত্তি অধিকারের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি কোন ধরনের বৈষম্যের শিকার হয়েছেন?

২. আপনারা কি নির্দিষ্ট কোনো সামাজিক বা সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান আয়োজন করে থাকেন? যদি থাকেন তাহলে সেই অনুষ্ঠানগুলি সম্পর্কে বলুন। স্থানীয় লোকজন আপনাদের অনুষ্ঠানগুলি কিভাবে মূল্যায়ন করে থাকে? এই সমস্ত অনুষ্ঠানে স্থানীয় লোকজন কি আপনাদের সাথে অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকে? যদি না করে তাহলে কেন?

৩. আপনারা কি সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ বাংলাদেশীদের সাথে সামাজিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানে অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকেন? যদি থাকেন তাহলে কোন ধরনের অনুষ্ঠানে অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকেন?

৪. বাংলাদেশের মধ্যে আপনার বর্তমান বাসস্থান হতে অন্য কোনো জায়গায় স্থানান্তর হতে চাইলে আপনার কি কোন ধরনের বাঁধা/প্রতিবন্ধকতার সম্মুখীন হতে হয়? যদি হয় তাহলে কি?

৫. আপনি অসুস্থ হলে কোথায় চিকিৎসা সেবা নিয়ে থাকেন? আপনাদের কি বিনামূল্যে সরকারী স্বাস্থ্য সেবার সুযোগ রয়েছে? সরকারী হাসপাতাল হতে আপনার কোন ধরনের সুযোগ-সুবিধা পেয়ে থাকেন? আপনি কি হাসপাতাল থেকে চিকিৎসার ক্ষেত্রে কোনোভাবে অবহেলিত হয়েছেন? যদি হয়ে থাকেন তাহালে কখন ও কিভাবে হয়েছিলেন?

৬. জন্ম নিবন্ধন সম্পর্কে কি আপনার অবগত আছে? হ্যা, তাহলে আপনার সন্তানের জন্ম নিবন্ধনের জন্য আবেদন করে ছিলেন কি? এর ফলাফল কি হয়েছে?

৭. আপনার নিজস্ব সমাজে চলাফেরার ক্ষেত্রে আপনার কোনো বাঁধা আছে কি? যদি থাকে, তা কি ধরনের? আপনি কি কোন নির্যাতনের শিকার হয়েছেন? যদি হয়ে থাকেন তাহলে তা কখন এবং কি ধরনের নির্যাতনের শিকার হয়েছেন?

৮. যে কোনো আভ্যন্তরীণ ও বাহ্যিক সমস্যা সমাধানের জন্য আপনি কি আইনি সহায়তা চাইতে পারেন? যদি পারেন তাহলে আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থা হতে কি ধরনের সহায়তা পেয়েছেন? যদি না পেয়ে থাকেন তাহলে কিভাবে সমস্যার সমাধান করেন? আপনি বা আপনার সমাজের কোনো ব্যক্তি বা আইনি সহায়তার ব্যাপারে কোনো অভিজ্ঞতা আছে? এর ফলাফল কি?

৯. আপনি কি স্থানীয় ও জাতীয় নির্বাচনে ভোট দিতে পারেন? যদি না পারেন, কেন?

১০. আপনার কি জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র আছে? যদি না থাকে তবে কেন? জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের জন্য কি আবেদন করেছেন? যদি না করে থাকেন তাহলে কেন করেন নাই? যদি করে থাকেন তাহলে তার ফলাফল কি?

১১. আপনার ব্যক্তি ও গোত্র জীবন গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশী ব্যক্তি বর্গ ও প্রতিষ্ঠান দ্বারা আপনার কোনো ধরনের অনুপ্রেরণা পেয়েছেন? এর ফলে আপনাদের ব্যক্তিগত বা গৌত্র ভিত্তিক জীবনে কোনো ধরনের পরিবর্তন হয়েছে কি? যদি হয় তাহলে কোন ধরনের পরিবর্তন আপনি লক্ষ্য করেছেন?

১২. আপনার সমাজে মেয়েদের কি নির্দিষ্ট কোনো সমস্যা আছে যা আপনি আলোচনা করতে চান? যদি থাকে তাহলে তা কি?

সেকশন **F**

## নীতিমালা

১. আপনি কোনো কৌশল অবলম্বন করে নিজেকে বর্তমানে অবস্থায় বা পরিস্থিতির সাথে খাপ খাইয়ে চলার চেষ্টা করে থাকেন?

২. আপনাদের জীবন মান উন্নয়নে কোন ধরনের সাহায্য বা সেবার প্রয়োজন আছে বলে মনে করেন?

৩. আপনার বর্তমান অবস্থান কে আপনি কিভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?

# Part-4 (B)

## Male Perception (Question for Male Respondents)

১. বাড়ীতে বা বাড়ীর বাহিরে আপনি কোন ধরনের কাজ করেন? এ ধরনের কাজ করতে আপনার কেমন লাগে?

২. পরিবারে আপনার স্ত্রীর ভূমিকা কি? এ বিষয়ে আপনার কোনো মতামত আছে কি?

৩. আপনার ব্যক্তি ও গোত্র জীবন গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশী ব্যক্তিবর্গ ও প্রতিষ্ঠান দ্বারা আপনারা কোন ধরনের অনুপ্রেরণা পেয়েছেন কি? এর ফলে আপনাদের ব্যক্তিগত বা গোত্র ভিত্তিক জীবনে কোনো ধরনের পরিবর্তন হয়েছে কি? যদি হয় তাহলে কোনো ধরনের পরিবর্তন আপনি লক্ষ্য করেছেন?

# Appendix 3

# Facts and Figures
## of
## Gender Compendium of Bangladesh 2009
## (In Shortcut)

## December 2009

## Capacity Building of BBS Project
## Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

# Appendix 4

**All the pictures/images have been presented to show the socio-cultural and economic life of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh. I ensured that the people in these pictures are not interviewed as research participants for this study. All the photos have been taken with the permission of the individual.**

**Picture 1- Garo men and women in their traditional ceremonial clothes**



**Picture 2- Garo people presenting their traditional dance in Wangala festival**

**Picture 3- Garo people's celebration in Wangala festival**



**Picture 4- Garo women in their traditional ceremonial clothes and hand-made ornaments**

**Picture 5- Garo people singing and dancing performance in the Wangla festival**



**Picture 6- Chakma woman weaving a traditional loom**

**Picture 7- A Chakma woman weaving a traditional loom with the support of bamboo hut**



**Picture 8- Chakma woman collecting turmeric from homestead land**

**Picture 9- Chakma woman carrying basket on her back to hold stuffs**



**Picture 10- Chakma woman carrying clothes in a basket on her back**

**Picture 11- Chakma woman smoking Shesha/Hukka which is made by bamboo**



**Picture 12- A Chakma woman in their regular informal dress**

**Picture 13- A Gao woman working in a paddy/rice filed**



**Picture 14- A Gao woman carrying her child during the work in a field**

**Picture 14- Indigenous women from various communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts**