

Chakma Language: Survival from being extinct in Bangladesh

Submitted by

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This Paper is dedicated to my parents and the Chakma Community itself for encouraging me to think deep about the community.

Abstract

At present days, the world is marked by a discrepancy in language development. Language loss has become a common phenomenon throughout the world. There were almost 50,000 languages and among them only 10,000 languages currently are surviving. Almost, everyday the world is losing one language. It is likely to happen in those countries who have more than language in practice. In such situation the dominant language engulfs the minority languages. In Bangladesh several indigenous groups are living and practicing their own culture. However, because of various reasons they are unable to maintain their own culture. Thus, they are gradually losing their cultural heritage and language loss is its consequence. This paper focuses on Chakma community to explore the factors to language shift from Chakma to Bangla. In order to explore the reasons, a survey has been conducted on 60 Chakma people living in Rangamati and Dhaka region. Researcher will be comparing data collected from both regions. This paper concludes with some steps that can be used to save the Chakma language from language loss.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Language is the backbone of a society. It is the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way. Language plays a vital role in building a society or a country. Bloch and Trager (as cited in Lyons, 1981) mentioned in their book “outline of linguistic analysis” that “a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates” (p. 4). Every language shares distinct features which make them different from other languages. Hence, language works as the identity of any ethnicity, group of people or any country and it not only identifies but also creates unity among the speakers of particular language.

On the other hand, mother tongue is the language that is learnt from the surroundings without any academic setting. Butskamm (2003) believes, mother tongue teaches us to think, communicate and believe (P. 29). In addition to that Spolsky (1998) says, among all the other markers like, food, clothes or religion, Language is the most common ways to identify a person as he/she uses the language inherited from his/her parents (57).

Nowadays, because of the globalization people are mostly exposed to different cultures and different languages. As a result, they are learning more than one language and also practicing them for living. Moreover, countries like Bangladesh, India and etc. have more than one language in practice and many dialects of the national language. For instance, In Bangladesh Bangla is the official language used for both formal and informal communication throughout the country. Besides the official Bangla, country people also use several dialects of it. Such as dhakaiya, chatgaiya, nuakhaillya, borishaillya etc. Nevertheless, in the south eastern part of the country

almost 11 indigenous groups are living and practicing 10 different languages within the area. However, due to many reasons they are gradually shifting from their mother tongue to Bengali.

Among all the different indigenous communities the thesis focuses on the Chakma language as they are the largest community in the CHT. Compared to other communities Chakma community has vast literature and they are the largest community among all the other indigenous groups living in CHT. The literacy rate in this community is quite high compared to other communities living there (Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact, 2007). The researcher here tries to find out the possible reasons of language shift from Chakma to Bangla. It will also try to find out the consequences of language shift among the community.

1.2 Problem statement

In the era of globalization people are becoming in contact with several languages and culture. Therefore, many of the languages are being distinct from the world and some are about to. As similar situation to Chakma community they are becoming mostly influenced by the Bengali culture and Bangla language. In consequence to that they are gradually shifting to Bangla language and if it continues it might be lost from the country. Compared to Mizoram state of India, The government has implemented mother language education system within the state as prevention from losing the Chakma language. in order to make it noticeable to the people as well as the government this paper is to find out the possible factors to language loss and its solution to the Problems.

1.3 Research question

- i. What are the factors that compel Chakma community members to accept Bengali culture and language?
- ii. How non-government organizations are dedicatedly working on indigenous mother language education?
- iii. What initiatives can be taken by the government to save Chakma language loss from being extinct in Bangladesh?
- iv. How the community itself can come forward to be loyal to their respective mother tongue and preserve it?

1.4 Importance of the Research

By conducting the research everyone will be able to know that Chakma language is going through language shift to Bangla and it is gradually moving towards language loss. It will let everyone know, how Chakma people are becoming more and more exposed to Bengali culture and language. This research will discuss about the 1997 peace accord that was signed in 2nd December by the government and the promises that was signed in the accord about providing education system in their respective mother tongue. Besides, it will also let the majority know how the Chakma community feels about using a language that is not their respective mother tongue. It will also find out the incidents on Language that are happening in CHT and their expectations from the government to establish mother language education system from primary level.

1.5 Limitation

While conducting the survey the researcher went through several limitations. Maximum of the participants living in CHT were not much efficient in English. Thus, the researcher has to translate all the questionnaires into Bangla for their better understanding and also many of the answers were given in Bangla. Another possible constrain was unavailability of the participants who are student. Since the survey was conducted during the midterm session in both colleges and universities, so unavailability was another constrain that the researcher had to went through. As a result she has to ask for several appointments. Moreover, many of the participants never learnt the written alphabet of their mother tongue. Thus they feel shy of acknowledging that because of self-guilt.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Before we head into deep of the research it is necessary to know the definition and related factors to language loss in a country. Therefore this chapter will discuss about Language loss, and its impact.

2.1 Language Loss

Language is like a river which undergoes to several changes to flow. Because of globalization and many other reasons a language mix with other languages and culture therefore, language loss is the immediate result of the situation.

There are several definitions have been established by several linguists. According to Longman dictionary (2010), Language loss occurs where second language has more influence than first language and because of minimal use of first language individual losses linguistics proficiency in it (p. 318).

However, Language loss occurs when the prominent language takes over the minority languages that are used only for oral communicative purpose. According to Holmes (2001) in case of language loss speakers of the first language become less proficient in their own mother tongue because of lesser use and gradually it brings death of the language (57). However the use of their first language suffices only into household works or for personal activities such as praying, dreaming, counting or other private domains. As a result the vocabulary range of the first language shrinks and they become more dependent of the prominent language. Language loss mainly occurs when the language cannot be transferred on to the children of the first language as

ancestors dies with their own language. Moreover, fluency in the language increases with age, as younger generations prefer to speak another tongue; usually the dominant societal (Crawford, 1996). Holmes(2001)said Language loss and Language shift are similar as language loss occurs when one shifts language (p. 57). Therefore many important issues are at play when looking into the related issues causing language loss, such as Language shift, bilingualism and multilingualism.

2.2 Language shift

In recent days language shift is a common phenomenon throughout the world. In a multilingual society, it is very common that the dominant language overtakes the use of minority languages which is fairly known as Language shift. Language shift mainly occurs when minority language speakers mix with other culture and languages because of globalization and adapts many vocabularies and culture. According to Longman Dictionary of applied linguistics (1985), language shift is a Change from the use of one language to another. This mainly occurs when people of that language migrate to a place where there main language is different (p. 322).Such as the situation in USA where immigrants from many non-English spoken countries gather in the country for living. In addition when a shift occurs, it always shifts towards the dominant language groups. In the book “Introduction to Bilingualism” Hoffman (1991) mentioned that if a community neglects their mother tongue and adopts another language that causes language shift (p. 186). Thus, Language shift is mainly changing the use of language from one to another.

Language shift started from the very early ages when people first learnt to communicate with people from different tribes. Fakuade, Gambo and Bashir (2003) wrote in their book that, at the very beginning of trading market system people could sell their goods with better communication. Therefore they were supposed to be able to communicate with the other

communities or tribes they are dealing with. If their linguistics knowledge does not sell better in the linguistics market they are likely to shift their language. This shift can be a dialect variety to a standard variety or minority to majority of the language. (p. 296).

Besides language shift may also happen when immigrants from different communities or countries move to a new place and shift language for survival. In order to overcome the language barriers in a new place with new language, immigrant people learn the new language as their second language. Thus becoming mostly exposed to new culture and language and using it frequently in everyday basis, immigrant's most likely to shift language. For instance, the situation of Chakma people living in the capital; they are more influenced by Bengali culture and language because of the environment. However, it is a fact that bilingualism and multilingualism are the necessary factor to language shift.

2.3 Bilingual and Multilingual

2.3.1 Bilingualism

Commonly when a person is able to communicate in two languages is known as bilingual. According to Longman dictionary (2010), bilingualism is ability of using two languages either by an individual or by the group of people or community is fairly called as bilingualism (P. 55). In addition to that Spolsky (1998) mentioned that bilingualism is when a person the ability to perform some functional ability in both of the languages can be called as bilingual. This may vary from limited ability in one or more domains or to a very strong command of both languages (p. 45). It means the person is able to play some function using both the languages. Hall (1952) added by stating that bilingual people must have some command over the grammatical structure of both languages (65). However, a person is bilingual when he/she is able to conduct some function using grammatical structure of both languages.

2.3.2 Multilingual

On the other hand, a person is multilingual if he/she knows more than two languages. In Longman dictionary multilingualism is when a people known more than two languages (p. 379). Crystal added by saying that Multilingual refers to a particular speech community which makes use of two or more languages.

2.4 Factors to language shift

What factors that force community people to language shift? It is one of the common issues throughout the world as many languages are going through language shift. According to Holmes (2001) and Fishman (1991), major factors that leads languages to language shift are Political, social, economic, cultural and geographical situation.

2.4.1 Political and economic factor

To demolish a language or a community political factor plays an important role. Neglecting the use of minority language in the official work and also avoid recognizing its existence is the usual cause of language shift. Holmes (2001) calls it a reason for learning the second language. Even in the Education system and in any official sectors like court, minority language speaker must use second language which is the official language of the state. According to Holmes, Minority groups do not feel any necessity to preserve their language. As in case of monolingual context, if the country is run by a predominant language in all the major institutional domains (59). Also to demand for the rights speakers of minority language much uses the Superior language to communicate with them. Politically superior people can control racial, economic, sexual or any kind of cultural democracy (Fishman, 1991). A politically superior people can play and

influential role to specifying the standard language of the state. Moreover, politically influential people make the rules and norms. More in the context where to have economically stable life minority language speakers have to learn Bangla as it is the official language. If the minority people are not well aware of the official language they are not likely to get any better job in Bangladeshi contexts.

2.4.2 Physical and demographic location

Physical location is another prior issue to the language shift. In this context physical dislocation means migrating to another place for job, school, college where both cultural and social structure is totally different. In such situation it becomes tough to maintain different culture and norms. Also people have to learn new language, culture, society, norms and conditions etc. therefore cause language shift in a wider range. For instance, immigrants from different countries come to the United States and start living there. There people from non-English spoken countries have to learn English and their culture as well which gradually leads to language shift. On the other hand Paulston (1986) mentions that if the minority/immigrant speakers are politically or economically powerful, there are possibilities to maintain their own culture and language. Besides, they can influence the majority with their culture (p. 494). Such as, because of globalization many people from English spoken countries are coming to Bangladesh for various purposes. Some are staying here for 7-8 years and some are here for more or less than that. In that situation they are not only maintaining their culture but also influencing the people to follow them as English people are economically powerful and so as their language. Hence, demographic location and migrating to a new place or a society can cause language shift.

2.4.3 Social dislocation

Indigenous groups are economically and educationally disadvantaged than the majority people as there are less educational institutes and less job opportunities. As a result, they remain poor and ignored. Fishman says, they are “disadvantaged by product” (1991, p. 59) which means they are poor by birth as their ancestors were poor. Besides, when the speakers of a particular language have low educational background, less income their languages and culture gets less importance in the country. In order to get a better life, minority people have urge to shift to the majority group. And people thinking about better future they go for re-linguification and re-ethnification. Social dislocation can be a major issue for any ethno cultural community. In this process minority people change their total identity wishing better life. Fishman says, “social dislocation, the siphoning off the talented, the enterprising, the adventurous, the imaginative and the creative, is a serious problem for the future of any ethnocultural community (1991, p. 61).”

2.4.4 Cultural factor

Besides, social and demographic location factors, cultural factor is another important element to language shift. According to Fishman, minority language can be shift to majority language by relocating the ethnic people or mixing them with the majority populating so that they can interact. It is a diplomatic political way of making the minority languages going through to some changes. He also included that, there is a possibility of reaction from the minority people. People accepting the majority language and culture, if they do not get the expected rewards or feel disillusioned there is a possibility for them to revive but for some this may become unreachable goal (1991, p. 64).

2.5 Theories on language change

2.5.1 Wave theory

Holmes (2001) introduces with a term “wave theory” that discusses about the way of Language change in a community. This theory has been used by several linguists to describe how language change occurs and how it gradually spreads throughout the community. Here wave is used as metaphor that identifies the spread of language change. Any changes do not occur in particular direction in specific rate rather it is more simultaneous. “Social factors such as age, status, gender and region affect the rates of change and the direction in which the waves roll most swiftly (2001, p. 200). By this she means, language change does not occur equally in all the communities and this wave spreads very fast mostly by the young aged people. This wave spreads from group to group and style to style. Any single change in language among any age group, social group or region spread from individual to another and gradually from group; this wave spread is a vast process of language change.

2.6 overview of Chakma Community

In Bangladesh Chakma community lives in Chittagong Hill tracts. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is situated in the south eastern part of the Bangladesh surrounded by green hills. It includes almost 13,294 square km of area which is almost 10% of land area in Bangladesh (Asian Indian Peoples’ Pact, 2007). It has Myanmar border in the east and Indian border on the Northeastern part of it. Chittagong Hill tract is divided into three districts which are Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachori. Within these three hill districts there are eleven ethnicities living, such as Chakma, Bawm, Chak, Khyang, Khumi, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Lushai, Mro and Pankhua. All the indigenous groups follow their own culture and tradition. They speak in their own respective languages. Among all the eleven indigenous groups Chakma are the largest of all.

They like to call themselves as “jummo people” which means hilly people (S. Chakma, 2002). According to 1991 Provisional census report, the total population in CHT including Bengalees were about 501,144 where Chakma community having largest population of 239,417 (Asian Indigenous Peoples’ Pact, 2007).

Chakma People are the followers of Buddhism and they have different heritage, culture and life style than plain land people. They are mainly Tibeto-barman and it is said that their ancestors are originally from Arakan. They have physical features similar to mongoloids. Chakmas are living not only in Bangladesh but also in Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and a few of them are living in Myanmar also. In his book S. Chakma (2002) mentioned that they have been living in the CHT since 15th century. (p. 22)

2.7 Chakma Language

There were almost 50,000 languages in the world. All the languages are classified into two categories, one is Indo-European and the other one is Sino-Tibetan (Fromkin and Rodman, 1973). Chakma Language falls under Indo-European Language. They have their own words and sounds that have both written and spoken forms. According to Sugata Chakma (1988), a Chakma Language researcher, stated that previously Chakma people used to have written forms of Religious texts, medical texts, poems, songs, theatre plays etc. (p. 10). Because of less interest and its minimal use, its use is restricted only in peoples’ oral communication.

Dr. George Abraham Grierson (1903) stated Chakma as an individual language. He also added by saying that Chakma alphabets have similarities in cursive form with Khmer characters which are mostly used in Laos, Cambodia, Siam and the southern part of Burma (p. 321).

2.8 Political overview of CHT

Chittagong hill tract is the only region that has unique legal and administrative system that is different from the rest of the country. As CHT is a hilly place similar administrative rule applied for plain land areas will not suit with this situation. Including all the administrative institutions for development interventions that are prevailing in the country and also many other institutions that are reflective of the distinct cultural, socio-political and historical background exist in CHT (Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact, 2007).

If we look back even before the British rule, it is worth mentioning that, CHT was an independent and self-governed region before and during the Mughals till 1860. Even the territory area of the CHT was larger than the present. Also CHT had to go through economic exploitation as a tributary pay back to the Mughals. After the battle of Plassey, British colonialism took over the CHT region under its rule (University of Arizona online Library)As a tribute to East India Company three chiefs (Chakma Chief, Bomang Chief, Mong chief) of Jumma people had to tribute cotton conducted by the subsidiary Bengali agents by the company. As a result, indigenous people had to come across to communicate with the Bengali people and many political conflicts started to occur. During then many non-indigenous people started to settle down in CHT. (Sociocultural baseline survey, 2009)

So encroachment of the Chakma territory, mandatory tribute to the company and exploitation of its natural resources made the indigenous peoples of the CHT to protest against the Company. As it was a fight between unequal powers thus CHT people surrendered to the British company. Later the East India Company sealed a deal a treaty in 1799 that brings the CHT totally under

British rule and pay mandatory tribute. Apart from that the company will have no interference in their internal affairs. During the period of British colonization CHT was regarded as the excluded area to protect the sociocultural and political institutions that are based on customary laws and community land ownership. Later in the year 1900 British government made a CHT amendment as a safeguard for the jumma people from exploitation of their land.

Right after the Pakistani came to rule in 1947, they retained the “excluded area” in the first constitution passed in 1956. Including CHT into its territory Pakistan government amended laws that restricts entries of the non-indigenous people in the area and protected the acquisition of land sites. But after 1960 during the Pakistani regime and even after Bangladesh came to independent the place was kept open for non-indigenous people to come and settle in the region. Thus many non-indigenous people came and grab lands of jumma people and slow conflict started between them. Soon after Bangladesh gets independence from Pakistan rule 1972, M.N.Larma, a member of the parliament demanded for autonomy rule within the CHT region and selective parliament seats for the indigenous people but all his hard work on behalf of Chakma community went in vain. Later, the first constitutional amendment was published without presenting the existence of indigenous people in the country.

Moreover, the government took suppressive measures to control the jummo people from self-determination by locating military force and relocating Bengali population in the CHT. In order to find alternatives to ensure their survival the indigenous people formed a force led by M N Larma which is known as “ParbattaChattagram Jana SamghatiSamiti” and PCJSS in short (Asian Indigenous Peoples’ Pact, 2007).

2.9 Education status of Chakma communities

Education is one of the major components of human capital. In CHT there is Government, Non-Government and other religious institutions and adult literacy centers are available (Socio-Economical baseline survey, 2009). There are numerous primary, secondary schools, colleges and madrasas are available for people living in the town and in the remote areas there are only a few number of schools are available and most of them are irregular. In the book 'Education and Language Needs of the Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh' by Kamal (2004) shows that, Among the indigenous students in CHT 44% of them get admission in Government primary schools, 24% of the them goes for NGO schools Like hill point, BRAC etc. and other 21% enrolls in missionary schools. Last but not the least, other 5% of them look for Satellite schools and rest 2% in primary schools (24)

Most of the indigenous groups are living in isolated areas or far away from mainstream areas thus they get less educational opportunities than plain land people. There is no government statistical information about the literacy rate in the Chittagong Hill tracts but according to the survey conducted by NGO's like BRAC and UNDP, The expected result of the Education report is not satisfactory. (Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact, 2007)

A survey conducted by Rafi and Chowdhury on remote areas of CHT found the highest literacy rate which is 36.2% among the Chakma communities.

However, there are also several constrains that causes to drop out or lesser literacy rate. According to AIPP (Asian Indigenous people's pact) (2007), Language Problem is a major factor to the situation. As Bangladesh education system is Bangla oriented, hence most of the cases indigenous students learning in Bangla language faces problem to understand the context. Thus

language becomes barrier to education for indigenous students (p. 19). In other cases indigenous students feel anxiety to go to schools and attending classes as they do not find the environment comfortable for language and cultural barriers. This happens because many of the teachers are non-indigenous who has different cultural background. In relation to that Language researcher P. Chakma (October 10, 2014) mentions dropout rate among indigenous students is not being able to cope-up with the situation, language and cultural barrier with the mates and surroundings. In “The Dhaka Tribune”, a Bangladesh based Newspaper, M. Chakma writes Education and classroom instruction through the mother tongue among indigenous children can play important role to reduce drop-out numbers to a good extent. Besides, now-a-days parents are more conscious teaching Bangla to their children so that they face lesser obstacles with the surroundings and with the majority of the people. Besides Bangla they are also emphasizing on learning English. Although they are using Chakma language in everyday purpose only in terms of communicating but they are prioritizing most to both Bangla and English (Kamal, Sikder and Nasreen, 2004, p. 9). As a result Chakma language is being ignored and ultimately leading it to language loss.

Nevertheless, in an interview Chakma language researcher and a school teacher Mrityika Chakma shares valuable information. According to the accord of 1997, Education was the core issue for the indigenous people of CHT In order to protect the ethnic group. In this accord the government promises better education system in their respective mother tongue so that all the indigenous groups will be able to maintain their own language and it will become easy to cope with the education system (Mohsin, 2003, p. 48). Yet there are many NGO's like Asha, BRAC, UNDP, Green Hill etc. have taken steps to promote education system in their mother tongue. CHT

people are still looking forward to government to take a step and promote Educational system using mother tongue at least in primary education.

Chapter 3

3.1 Methodology

The goal of this research is to find out the present state of Chakma language and its possible factors to language shift from Chakma to Bangla. This research also tries to bring out some possible solutions to the problem. Therefore, researcher conducted a survey on Chakma People living both in Rangamati and Dhaka region. They were asked to answer survey questionnaires which were prepared with both close ended and open ended questions to provide both quantitative and qualitative answer.

3.2 Research design

Since this research is mainly on preserving Chakma language from language loss so maximum of the questions were based on the related topic. The researcher divided all the questions into three different section using three different techniques so that participants do not find boring while answering the questionnaires. It contains both close ended and open ended questions. All the questions are designed such way that will bring out the precise information.

3.4 Sampling

This research is being done aiming to find out the reasons of Chakma community people becoming more influenced by Bangla than Chakma. Hence, researcher divided the expected participants into three different age groups of two separate areas. There were 60 random participants who were selected for the survey. 30 of them were from Rangamati and the rest were from Dhaka region. Participants from Dhaka are permanent residents or staying there for couple

of years for study purpose. 10 participants were selected from each age group. Here is the age distribution list.

- i. Age 15-25 – Students -10 participants
- ii. Age 26-35 – Professionals -10 participants
- iii. Age 36-50– Seniors – 10 Participants

They were provided the survey questionnaires by the researcher. Besides that, she also took oral interview on the topic from a few of the Chakma language researchers which were quite effective.

3.5 Setting

As the participants were from both Rangamati and Dhaka, so the survey was conducted in two areas. In order to conduct the survey instead of academic setting the researcher went for direct formal settings. In this setting, participants could ask questions to the researcher for further query about the questions. Moreover the researcher also was able to ask farther information on the topic to the participant beyond the survey questionnaires. The survey was conducted in homely environment thus participants were quite comfortable.

3.6 Instruments

In the questionnaire there are in total 22 questions which are divided into three different sections. First section lets the participants to choose the correct answer from the given options. Later in the second section, it asks the participant to answer the given question only by placing yes or no. finally the last section is where participants have to give some medium broad question's answer justifying their opinion.

3.7 Data analysis procedure

As soon as the survey was done, researcher collected all the papers and evaluated. The questionnaire has both qualitative and quantitative question. So in order to evaluate them effectively the researcher divided three of the sections and evaluated individually. She also separated all the response papers into 2 groups, which are Rangamati and Dhaka region. After that the researcher analyzed all the questions carefully.

Chapter 4

4.1 Findings and analysis

This section of the research paper will present the survey result with statistics and it will try to analyze the given answers by the participants. There were 60 participants participated in the survey and among them 30 were from Rangamati and other 30 participants were from Dhaka region. There were 21 questions in the questionnaire from which first and second sections were mainly close ended questions using two different techniques. Lastly section no. 3 is more elaborate and descriptive than other two. Therefore, third section is qualitative and other two sections are quantitative.

4.2 Overview of the survey

Section no. 1

Given tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 at the end of the paper presents responses given by the participants from both Rangamati and Dhaka region. The first table shows data collected from Rangamati region and the other one shows Dhaka based data entry on Chakma community. If we go through two of the tables we can easily compare answers according to its overall percentage.

Question no. 2

Which language do you use most frequently in your daily life?

Participants	Response	Number			
		Rangamati		Dhaka	
Students	Chakma	0	10%	0	0%

Professionals		3		0	
Seniors		0		0	
Students	Both	10	90%	4	73%
professional		7		9	
Seniors		10		9	
Students	Bangla	0	0%	6	27%
professional		0		1	
Seniors		0		1	

The above table shows the responses given by the participants to the question number 2. In the table we can see that majority of the People use Chakma and Bangla in everyday basis. Except 10% of the people from Rangamati use only Chakma and on the other hand 27% of the Dhaka based people use only Bangla in daily basis. Finally the rest 90% in Rangamati and 73% in Dhaka region are users of both languages in their everyday life. So here we can say majority of the members in community living in Dhaka are speakers of both Bangla and Chakma but mostly Bangla. In Rangamati community people are speaker of both Chakma and Bangla in their daily basis. Therefore it can be said that Chakma people are mostly bilingual.

Question no.3

Which language you frequently use in work place or school/colleges?

Participants	Response	Number			
		Rangamati		Dhaka	
Students	Bangla	7	70%	9	47%
Professionals		6		7	

Seniors		8		10	
Students	Chakma	1	20%	0	0%
Professional		4		0	
Seniors		1		0	
Students	Both	2	10%	1	53%
Professional		0		3	
Seniors		1		0	

In the question no. 3 participants were asked to choose the language they use frequently at their work places. According to the collected data, 70% people in Rangamati use Bangla frequently in their work places where as in Dhaka region the ratio is 100%. Then, 20% of the people use Chakma in their work places and other 10% participants use both Chakma and Bangla equally. This means almost half of the day they speak Bangla which definitely is a reason to language shift and language loss.

Question no. 4

Which of the language/s do you feel comfortable to communicate with people?

Participants	Response	Number			
		Rangamati		Dhaka	
Students	Bangla	0	0%	0	10%
Professionals		0		3	
Seniors		0		0	
Students	Chakma	0	0%	0	0%

professional		0		0	
Seniors		0		0	
Students	Both	10	100%	10	90%
professional		10		7	
Seniors		10		10	

Among all the participants including Rangamati and Dhaka region majority of the people are able to communicate in both Bangla and Chakma language. Other 10% people in Dhaka are dedicated speakers of Bangla who are more comfortable speaking second language than their respective mother tongue. The statistics shows direct language shift in Chakma community.

Question no. 5

Which language do you have native like proficiency in terms of reading and writing?

Participants	Response	Number			
		Rangamati		Dhaka	
Students	Chakma	0	3%	2	6%
Professionals		0		0	
Seniors		1		0	
Students	Bangla	10	87%	0	56%
professional		8		08	
Seniors		8		9	
Students	English	0	10%	8	36%
Professional		2		2	
Seniors		1		1	

To the question no. 5, majority of the people replied that they have native like proficiency in Bangla. On the other hand, shockingly only 3% and 6% people have native like proficiency in Chakma. Later the rest of the people are efficient in English.

Section 2

Section 2 contains quantitative close ended questions which require participants to answer them writing Yes or No.

Question no. 3

Question	Rangamati		Dhaka	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Despite having a written form of the language, statistics shows that almost 90% of the population of Chakma community is unaware of reading and writing in their mother tongue. Do you agree?	30	0	30	0
Percentage	100%	0%	100%	0%

This question asks participants to answer if majority of the community are not aware of reading and writing in their mother tongue. Almost 100% of the participants agreed to the question. Thus when a language does not have practice of written form of their mother tongue is obviously to lose gradually. So we can say that, if the situation goes such that 90% or more people do not learn to write and read their mother tongue, Chakma language will be extinct soon.

Question no. 5

Question	Rangamati		Dhaka	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
In order to get economically and socially secured life is the only reason for parents to prefer Bangla and English as learning mode for their children more than their respective mother tongue. Do you agree?	30	0	30	0
	100		100	

In order to answer this question almost 100% people from both Rangamati and Dhaka region agreed to the fact. It can be said from the replied that in order to be economically and socially stable majority of the Chakma community people study Bangla and English language more than their respective mother tongue. Thus many of the Community members Learn Bangla and English from their young age as Bangla is the academic mode and there is a mandatory English subject in the education system.

Question no. 6

Question	Rangamati		Dhaka	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you think academic system in				

Bangladesh which is mainly on Bangla and describes Bengali culture makes a barrier for many of the Chakma students which is one of the main factors in primary school drop out?	20	10	30	0
Percentage	66%	33%	100%	0

Question no. 6 requires participants reply to the question which says, if academic system which mainly Bangla language and Bengali culture centered causes barrier to Chakma students and is one of the main factors to primary school dropout. In reply to this question 83% of the participants from both regions agreed to this fact on the other hand 16% gave negative response. Among all the participants, majority of them were school teachers and according to them because of this fact school dropout is increasing in hill areas among indigenous students. We expect that Government will take immediate initiatives to the consequence.

Section 3

Question no. 1

Are you mostly exposed to Bengali culture and language? What are the factors that compel Chakma community people mostly exposed to Bengali culture? Give reasons.

As an answer to this question 100% of the participants agree with the statement that they are mostly exposed to Bengali culture and language. According to the young aged generation in Rangamati, all the educational institutions are based on Bangla and even all the contents in the academic books represent Bengali culture. On the other hand, young Chakma generation living

in Dhaka says as they are mostly surrounded by majority people (Bengali) and also in the capital they grew up knowing Bengali culture more than their own tradition. Also they must communicate with the majority of the people in order to survive. According to 43% of the senior participants, the major factor behind this in Rangamati is majority population in all the institutions is Bengali. Now a days, even in every major sectors such as business, education sector, banking sector etc. the majority population is Bengali.

Question no. 2

Many of the NGO's like BRAC, Asha, Green Hill, Tongya etc. are working dedicatedly to promote indigenous mother language education system mostly in rural places without government's support. Do you think that is effective for the long run? Describe in detail.

According to 54% of participants gave positive feedback, other 38% gave negative feedback and the rest took neutral position to the fact. According to 38% people, although it is an appreciative step by the NGO's who are dedicatedly working for the indigenous people and their rights, without the government support it is likely to walk without legs. They elaborated their answers by giving reasons, such as, (1) till now mother language education is not mandatory thus mother language learning gets neglected, (2) moreover it is provided only in rural places. (3) As there is no government support learning the language so gradually they will forget what was taught. But many of the participants mentioned that if this initiative gets proper media and government support it will definitely be possible to preserve the Chakma language in a broader sense.

Question no. 3

According to many of the Chakmas, there should be a Chakma version of educational text books of all subjects to promote the language at least in the primary level. What is your opinion to this and how this can be effective?

In question number 3, 80% people from Rangamati think that initiatives should be taken to provide education to the indigenous people in their respective mother tongue. But 20% participants living in Dhaka believe that it would be quite difficult to approach with the fact of translating all the books in Chakma Language may cost a lot and also time consuming. But as an alternative they suggested for a mandatory language course/subject that all the indigenous students will have to pass. Only by that language loss can be prevented in Chakma community.

Question no. 4

What initiatives can be taken by the government in order to preserve the Chakma language? Please list them down.

Here are the suggestions that majority of the participants suggested for the government to take initiatives in order to preserve the Chakma language.

1. Let the indigenous people learn their mother tongue in academic setting.
2. Include mandatory language course/subject for the indigenous students that they will have to pass in order to upgrade to the new class.
3. Take the initiative immediately before it is too late.
4. Provide a well-trained language teacher who has good proficiency on the language.

5. Making the government cultural institute more active in the hill districts and other medias like, radio, television more active in organizing programs that will encourage the youth learning their respective mother tongue.

Question no. 5

How parents can play an important role teaching Chakma language to their children? Describe it.

According to 90% of the participants believes that in order to learn own mother tongue and culture, parents can play the major role in the society. As children grow up following their parents, most of their thoughts and actions are similar to their parents. If parents do not have respect for their own mother tongue that will gradually be passed to the kids and kids may neglect their respective mother tongue. Surprisingly almost half of the participants mentioned that many Chakma people do not prefer Chakma while talking to their children. Even some of them said, many of the Chakmas believe if they communicate with their children in Bangla or English, they will speak fluent and appropriate Bangla or English. Such attitude towards mother tongue has high possibility to language shift.

Question no. 6

How young generation can be more encouraged learning their mother tongue?

50% people answered that young generation of the community can be more encouraged by organizing cultural programs on music, poem recitation and storytelling etc.; later by publishing

them may encourage as new generation people are creative and they thrive to bring out the uniqueness. Moreover 30% of them answered, by doing many seminars and offering lucrative opportunities young generation will be more interested. 20% people said, young generation will be more interested to learn their mother tongue if they get proper reward of learning the language. Such as providing job opportunities like in schools as a Chakma language teacher and creating language courses in other organizations.

Question no. 5

Being a citizen of this country who fought for their mother tongue, do you think even the indigenous citizens of the country must be able to at least read, write and speak in their respective mother tongue? And why?

It is an opinion based question which asks participants to answer to the question if it is necessary to learn the mother tongue of every indigenous group. Almost 100% participants agreed to this fact. According to them all the indigenous groups having written form of their mother tongue must learn to read and write in order to save their identity. Majority think every indigenous group must feel proud of being a member of their own community and should be aware about their self-identity. So they expect the government to provide mother language education system for all the indigenous groups living in Bangladesh and as well as to all the members in the community to become more conscious and dedicated to the community. Only by then the Chakma language can be preserved from language loss.

Chapter 5

5.1 Findings related to Central research question:

i. The Central research question enquires about the factors that compel Chakma community members to accept Bengali culture and their language. The research came out with several reasons to becoming mostly exposed to Bengali culture. The other major factors found through the survey that compel Chakma people shift language mostly into Bangla are

1. Education is one of the major fields to describe language shift. Lieberson and Timothy (1971) say, “Another factor which is important in language shift is the usage of language with parents and usage of language in school” (134). 90% of the participants have come from Bengali medium schools and colleges where the education system is based Bangla. And also majority of the student on the institutions are Bengali. Thus it is quite obvious to be more fluent in Bangla than Chakma. Besides 60% of the participants mentioned that lack of Chakma language learning institutions is the reason behind not being able to read and write their mother tongue.
2. Secondly economic and social stability is another factor that compels Chakma people mostly to language shift and becoming more influenced by Bengali culture. Thus almost 100% of the participants believe that, in order to get economic and social stability they are becoming more conscious and influenced by the Bengali culture and its language.
3. Political barrier is another crucial matter to language loss. Almost 90% of the participants said, according to the constitution presented by the government of ShaikhHasina in , the government promises to apply mother language education system for the indigenous people but the result is yet to see (Mohsin, 2003). Therefore, language loss is occurring

and also primary school drop-out rate among indigenous children is also increasing. Moreover, CHT peace accord that was signed in 1991 of 2nd December but its initiatives haven't been taken yet. Thus, majority of the population in hill districts are Bengali. As a result, all the indigenous groups have to use Bangla to communicate in everyday basis.

ii. Many non-government organizations, like BRAC, Asha, green hill, UNDP, UNESCO etc. are working dedicatedly to save endangered indigenous languages in CHT. They built several primary schools mostly in remote areas where indigenous children get less opportunity to study. They publish text books in Chakma languages with the means of educating and teaching their mother language. They conduct survey on indigenous students if they were facing any difficulties while student. After identifying the problem they take immediate step by giving proper training to the teachers or other measures. Many of the NGO's organize weekly seminars for the teachers that are teaching in those schools. Moreover, they conduct research on Chakma language with few selective Chakma language researchers.

iv. Almost 100% of the senior generations who are mostly language researchers and many of them are school teacher thinks, Chakma language can be saved only if government takes some proper initiatives. Non-government organizational steps are appreciative but it will not sustain in long run if they do not get proper field to use and practice it. However, government can take several initiatives to save the endangered indigenous languages. As young generation is the one to hold the sail of the ship, government can Encourage young generation to learn their respective mother tongue and to be more loyal to it. Government can also create various opportunities like proving job opportunities in Chakma language teaching and researching field. Moreover, cultural significance can also be a media to save the language. According to M. Chakma cultural institutes in three of the hill tracts

are not that active compared to other non-governmental organizations like JUM Aesthetic Council. Hence organizing many cultural events can encourage new generation to come forward and play a significance role for the community.

iv. The last question that researched on how the community itself can come forward to save their respective mother tongue. Both M. Chakma and S. Jyoty Chakma suggested that, in spite of only relying on government actions, every member of the community should play their roles to save the language. Statistics shows that, because of lack of conscious among parents regarding teaching their mother tongue to their children is one of the main factors to language shift. In relation to that, Holmes (2001) says; when a language can not be transferred to the new generation language loss occurs. Thus, in order to save the language parents must be careful and dedicated to their respective mother tongue. In spite of focusing only on Bangla and English they can talk to their children in Chakma language at least at home or in a family environment.

Conclusion

After going through the survey with different people of different ages holding different status the researcher found important issues that are causing language loss in Chakma community. Such as, Majority of the participants which is 67% people know two languages which means majority is bilingual. According to Holmes (2001) bilingualism means having some equal or some control over the grammar and structure of the second language. Moreover, bilingualism is always the precursor of language shift which can also be called Language loss (52).

In conclusion to the research, it can be said from the statistics collected in the survey that, Chakma community people are gradually shifting their language and losing their mother language vocabularies day by day. As according to Holmes (2001) language loss happens when people of the community started using the second language more than their mother tongue and gradually shrinks their vocabulary range. Moreover, language is the capital of an individual. So if the community cannot sell their capital in the linguistic market they are likely to shift language to the majority one. Similarly, Chakma community people cannot sell their capital in the linguistic market by their mother tongue; as a result they are gradually shifting from Chakma language to Bangla. If the government does not take proper initiatives by now, the language might be lost from the country. So by implementing mother language education system at primary education and providing we-trained teacher to teach the indigenous children language shift revitalization can be done. Bilingualism and multilingualism are indeed important assets of any country. It included versatility and heterogeneity to the countries human landscape. Therefore it is our responsibility to maintain natural versatility and preserve language which is the part of our identity from extinct.

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Appendix

Age:

Section 1

Choose the best answer/answers from the given options.

1. How many languages you can read, write and speak?
a. 1 b. 2 c. 3
2. Which language do you use most frequently in your daily life?
a. Chakma b. Both c. Bangla
3. Which language you frequently use in work place or school/colleges?
a. Bangla b. Chakma d. English
4. Which of the language/s do you feel comfortable to communicate with people?
a. Bangla b. Chakma c. both
5. Which language do you have native like proficiency in terms of reading and writing?
a. Chakma b. Bangla c. English
6. If you face problem switching code from Chakma to Bangla or English, how often is it?
a. Never rare to find, coz maximum have too much influence of bangla in them.
b. Rarely c. Very Often
7. Many of the Chakma people are fluent speaking both Chakma and Bangla. Which language do you find comfortable sharing your thoughts and opinion?
a. Mother tongue b. English c. Bangla

Section 2

Answer the following questions writing YES/NO

1. Can you read, write and speak in your own mother tongue?
2. Do you always use Chakma language at home?
3. Despite having a written form of the language, statistics shows that almost 90% of the population of Chakma community is unaware of reading and writing in their mother tongue. Do you agree?
4. Is there any initiatives taken by the government to promote Chakma language learning?
5. In order to get economically and socially secured life is the only reason for parents to prefer Bangla and English as learning mode for their children more than their respective mother tongue. Do you agree?
6. Do you think academic system in Bangladesh which is mainly on Bangla and describes Bengali culture makes a barrier for many of the Chakma students which is one of the main factors in primary school drop out?

Section 3

Write down the answers with description of the given questions.

1. Are you mostly exposed to Bengali culture and language? What are the factors that make Chakma community people mostly exposed to Bengali culture? Give reasons.

2. Many of the NGO's like BRAC, Asha, Green Hill, Tongya etc. are working dedicatedly to promote indigenous mother language education system mostly in rural places without government's support. Do you think that is effective for the long run? Describe in detail.

3. According to many of the Chakmas, there should be a Chakma version of educational text books of all subjects to promote the language at least in the primary level. What is your opinion to this and how this can be effective?

4. What initials can be taken by the government in order to preserve the Chakma language? Please list them down.

5. How parents can play an important role teaching Chakma language to their children? Describe it.

6. How young generation can be more encouraged learning Chakma language?

7. Can media play a major role promoting the Chakma language among the people?

8. Being a citizen of this country who fought for their mother tongue, do you think even the indigenous citizens of the country must be able to at least read, write and speak in their true mother tongue?

Questions		15-25 years	26-35 years	36-50 years	total	percentage
Q1	a	4	0	3	7	23%
	b	6	9	5	20	67%
	c	0	1	2	3	10%
Q2	a	0	3	0	3	10%
	b	10	7	10	27	90%
	c	0	0	0	0	0%
Q3	a	7	6	8	21	70%
	b	1	4	1	6	20%
	c	2	0	1	3	10%
Q4	a	0	0	0	0	0%
	b	0	0	0	0	0%
	C	10	10	10	30	100%
Q5	A	0	0	1	1	3%
	B	10	8	8	26	87%
	C	0	2	1	3	10%
Q6	A	0	0	0	0	0%

	B	5	5	2	12	40%
	C	5	5	8	18	60%
Q7	A	10	10	10	30	100%
	B	0	0	0	0	0%
	C	0	0	0	0	0%

4.2.1 Total response by the participants from Rangamati of section one

Questions		15-25 years	26-35 years	35-50 years	total	Percentage
Q1	a	0	0	0	0	0%
	b	10	10	10	30	100%
	c	0	0	0	0	0%
Q2	a	0	0	0	8	26%
	b	4	9	9	22	73%
	c	6	1	1	8	27%
Q3	a	2	4	8	14	47%
	b	0	0	0	0	0%
	c	8	6	2	16	53%

Q4	a	0	3	0	3	10%
	b	0	0	0	0	0%
	C	10	7	10	27	90%
Q5	A	2	0	0	2	7%
	B	0	8	9	17	56%
	C	8	2	1	11	37%
Q6	A	0	0	0	0	0%
	B	3	6	2	11	37%
	C	7	4	8	19	63%
Q7	A	10	9	10	29	97%
	B	0	0	0	0	
	C	0	1	0	1	3%

4.2.2 Total response by the participants of Dhaka to section one