

Cultural Displacement and Identity Crisis: The Experiences of
Bangladeshi Indigenous Students in Predominantly Bengali Urban
Centres

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved grandmother Lalminthang Vadir, the person who held my hands on my first day of school and my constant source of inspiration. Her quiet strength, wisdom and courage are carried in every word that I write and milestones I achieve in life. This is for everything that you were and will always continue to be.

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Abstract

Following the liberation war, Bangladeshis gained freedom from the oppressive rule of Pakistan, becoming citizens of a liberated nation. However, the hard-earned freedom translated differently for its indigenous population, living mostly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). They have been facing a gradual but steady systematic marginalization and disempowerment, making it challenging for them to survive in an ethnically Bengali majority country, shaped by a formidable presence of Bengali nationalistic beliefs and values. Due to a lack of accredited academic institutions, a shortage of qualified instructors, and subpar access to quality education in the CHT region, hundreds of aspiring indigenous students are compelled to relocate to major urban centres like Dhaka and Chittagong each year to pursue a standard quality education that promises a better future. Based on empirical data gathered from interviews with indigenous students who migrated to urban areas for higher education, the thesis argues that the unchecked dominance of Bengali nationalism in all spheres of life adversely affects the indigenous population. It leads to a systematic and discursive erasure, resulting in the marginalization and disempowerment of the indigenous people in CHT. Employing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of epistemic violence and Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge, the findings indicate that dislocated indigenous students suffer from an identity crisis stemming from their cultural displacement. The crisis is further aggravated by the systemic and institutionalised exclusion of indigenous languages and cultures, as well as the stigmatisation of indigenous traditional food and cultural practices.

Keywords: Chittagong Hill Tracts; indigenous students; epistemic violence; cultural displacement; identity crisis

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I can still vividly recall, to a certain degree, the earliest days of my childhood upbringing, was imbued with the essence of my Bawm culture, language, and communal way of life, rooted and sheltered within the hills of my hometown, Bandarban. My daily routines were largely shaped by immersing myself in Bawm folklore narrated by my grandparents, indulging in the earthy flavour of our traditional curries, going to the early hours of Sunday school to learn Bible studies and Bawm language, and having friends who shared the same identity and language as mine. I was able to spend a brief span of my life in the serenity of a shared communal environment where aspects of my Bawm identity and culture were never questioned, judged or compromised. Those were the only instances where I felt the strongest connection to my origin. However, when my parents enrolled me in an English medium school in Dhaka city at the age of seven, I stumbled into a world of greater challenges. Not only did I have to adjust myself to the uncertainty of navigating in a predominantly Bengali society and, but also compete in the environments of a different educational system. Simultaneously, I found myself in a predicament where I felt disregarded whenever I spoke Bawm language, ate traditional meals, dressed traditionally, or mentioned my indigenous name and identity. It is a challenge I still struggle to overcome because my identity and culture as a young Bawm woman are perceived as a liability and treated as an oddity.

Moving to an urban area in the pursuit of a ‘better future’ came at the silent expense of losing my cultural roots, language and sense of belonging, which eventually led to cultural displacement and an increasing disintegration of my indigenous identity. This was not a personal problem, but a challenge that, I agree, emerged from the deeply rooted institutional and structural system of the long-standing Bengali nationalism. This intensely personal

experience, which I am aware is also shared by every young indigenous student who left their hometown in search of a better education and bright future.

Bangladesh is in the process of evolving as a nation for the greater good of its citizens. In recent years some indigenous representations have become visible in urban cities especially, Dhaka and Chittagong. For example, Dhaka Parbotto Mela held almost every year showcasing indigenous handicrafts and delicacies such as pahari pitha, mungdi, laksu and much more. Photography or art exhibitions by indigenous artists and photographers highlighting various socio-political themes related to CHT. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the participation of young indigenous athletes in national teams, representing Bangladesh internationally in sports like football, table tennis, boxing and cricket. In media platforms, TV commercials such as Robi, Airtel and local apparels and shoe brands like Bata features indigenous models. In addition, the growth of indigenous restaurants like Hebaang, BBQ Express, CHT Express, Jaaba and Plates of Tradition in parts of Dhaka and Chittagong have garnered the likings of both Bengalis and indigenous people. However, such approach towards indigenous representation is certainly not enough because the institutionalised system remains exclusionary towards indigenous people.

As indigenous students adjust to the urban lifestyle, assimilating into Bengali cultural norms, the extensive use of Bangla and English language in academic environments disregards indigenous knowledge systems and creates a surrounding where native indigenous languages are neither acknowledged or nurtured. Indigenous students often become targets of preconceptions and are considered less competent or inadequate due to the prevalence of social stigma and marginalisation. This fact exists not because Indigenous people are less intelligent, but because educational theories and practices are developed and controlled by non-Indigenous peoples (Read et al. 231). This thesis explores how Bangladeshi indigenous students in urban areas navigate conflicting realities of cultural displacement and identity crisis as they willingly

or unwillingly assimilate into Bengali culture. In order to understand the adverse impact of Bengali nationalism on the indigenous students living in Bengali pre-dominated urban areas, this research was conceived through an extensive study of Michel Foucault's theory of 'power and knowledge' and Gayatri Spivak's concept on 'epistemic violence'. Furthermore, factors like exclusion of native indigenous languages in the educational system, the disconnection from indigenous traditional food and attire, lack of involvement in traditional practices, religious and cultural festivals are the primary factors causing this sense of detachment towards indigenous identity and cultural erosion among indigenous students, which will be examined thoroughly in the following chapters.

Research Objective

This study was undertaken with the objective to foster awareness about the inclusion and representation of the indigenous population as rightful citizens of the nation. This thesis explores and analyses the lived experiences of indigenous students who relocate to urban centres to pursue higher education and experience identity crisis and cultural displacement within the educational settings and social life in general. The research aims to study how cultural disparity affects indigenous students' academic performance, emotional, and social belonging, drawing attention towards the need for a more inclusive and culturally aware educational system and a conscious society that recognizes and respects the diverse indigenous identities of students within educational curricula and the mainstream.

Research Questions

This study is guided by one principal research question followed by two secondary ones:

How does the prevalence of dominant Bengali nationalism affect young indigenous students living in urban areas?

- a. What forms does this systematic discrimination take in education in urban areas?
- b. How does the compulsory integration into Bengali culture impact the indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and traditional practices?

Chapter 2: Background

2.1 The Indigenous Community of Bangladesh: Historical Context

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT hereafter) has been an ancestral homeland to 11 of 54 indigenous communities of Bangladesh including Bawm, Chakma, Pangkhua, Lushai, Marma, Tanchangya, Mrung (Mro), Tripura, Khyang, Chak and Khumi as stated by the CHT Regional Council Act of 1998. The country's Indigenous population is estimated to be 1,650,159, or 1% of the overall population, based on the 2022 census, but indigenous people have claimed the total number to be about five million (IWGIA). Bangladesh gained its independence during the Liberation War in 1971, with the declaration of Bengali nationalism for the recognition and rights to be conferred on Bengalis for claiming their identity and language. With language and identity at the core of their existence, Bangladeshis battled against the imposition of the Urdu language during the Language Movement in 1952. Hana Shams Ahmed, a human rights advocate stated, “Bengali nationalism was centred on and reflected by identity and language for which Bengalis are associated sentimentally with the Liberation War and Language Movement”. Nationalism supported majority dogmatism (Jahan 8). Independence from the brutal fight against authoritarianism and systematic eradication of the Bengalis was achieved by the partition of East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

Throughout history, indigenous narratives have been erased progressively from the national history of Bangladesh, which will be discussed in this section. The sacrifices of Bengali freedom fighters are prominently emphasised in historical discourse, however, countless individuals remain unaware that indigenous people also fought for Bangladesh, as the sacrifices and active participation of indigenous freedom fighters during the Liberation War remain disregarded and unrecorded. Their names are hardly ever mentioned or taught in school textbooks till this day despite playing a significant role alongside the Freedom Fighters in their pursuit of a free Bangladesh (Sathi). Prominent indigenous freedom fighters from the Orao,

Tripura, Santal, Khasi, Garo, Koch, and Hajong ethnicities and also from northern and northwestern regions such as Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Mymensingh actively participated. Female indigenous freedom fighters such as Kakon Bibi actively participated by providing medication, food and ammunition to the freedom fighters (Farhat). Other notable individuals include Lian Pumh Bawm and Mong King Mong Pru Sein who not only fought in the war but also provided refugees safe passage to India and more than 30 firearms to freedom fighters (Jahan). The indigenous freedom fighters are only discussed in one book titled *Muktijuddhe Adivasi*, in addition to that, seven indigenous freedom fighters, along with Kakon Bibi, were honoured at the National Press Club in Dhaka by organizations like Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolan and the Research and Development Collective (Sathi). To add to this, there is a common belief that Raja Tridiv Roy, then Chakma King sided with Pakistani armies and argued against Bangladesh's admission into the world body (Ahsan). Hana Shams Ahmed added, "this created a generalised misconception that all indigenous are loyal supporters to the state of Pakistan".

Since the British colonial period, indigenous people fought for the legitimacy of their rights and sovereignty of their ancestral homelands. These struggles have taken many forms, including against genocide, political marginalization, sexual violence, abduction, arson, militarisation of their territories and government propaganda aimed at isolating and silencing these communities from the outside world (Leonhardt and Singh). Article 27 of the Constitution of Bangladesh states that "all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection under it" according to the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Furthermore, discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and place of birth is explicitly prohibited by Article 28 of the Constitution. But the reality is far more different as the legal system is imposed unjustly on indigenous population due to an underrepresentation of indigenous representatives

in legal institutions and imbalance in the power structures between the indigenous and Bengali majority population.

To resolve violent conflicts and claim the rights of indigenous people from CHT, the Government of Bangladesh and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) signed the CHT Peace Accord in 1997. To some extent, progress was made for the indigenous development such as the National Adivasi Coordination Committee (NACC) formed in 1997, the CHT Peace Accord signed in 1997, the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts emerged in 1998, the amendment of CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act in 2001 was approved, the Small Ethnic Group Cultural Institute Act was adopted in 2001 (Jahan 9). Although the treaty was an effective model for conflict settlement, due to the lack of third-party intervention and direct involvement by international parties or civil society in the peace process, the primary concerns of the agreement are not yet implemented effectively. The issue at stake in the CHT is not just one of collateral protection; more importantly, it is one of self-governance as the right to possess culture, tradition, customs, customary ownership of land, and autonomy that is still not resolved. The subsequent strong militarization of CHT created a significant power imbalance between the state and the indigenous tribes. The intemperate dispute between armed members of PCJSS and Bangladeshi State troops officially ended with the signing of the agreement, however, improper implementation delegitimized the rights of indigenous population through sustained maintenance of centralised power controlled by Bengalis and military forces.

2.2 Pursuit of Progression Masked with Prejudice

Various politically driven operations in the name of development significantly altered the demographic balance between Bengalis and indigenous people in the CHT region. Substantial portions of agricultural land were expropriated for rubber plantations and to build Karnaphuli

Paper Mill in 1951. The construction of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam in 1962 submerged 54,000 acres of agricultural land in Rangamati including the palace of Chakma King. Moreover, 100,000 indigenous population were displaced, forcing 40,000 Chakmas to take refuge in North East India. In the aftermath, only one third of the displaced population were compensated. The Kaptai Dam damaged the agro-based main economy of the CHT and brought about a permanent disintegration of the Jumma (indigenous) people on one hand, and also led to the encroachment of Bengali Muslim population in the region in large numbers (Dhamai 149).

The 1951 census reported that there were only 9% Bengalis in CHT; today, the number of Bengalis and indigenous people living there is nearly equal. From a sociological point of view, the idea of creating a community out of randomly collected people from different districts is preposterous (Choudhury 139). The local indigenous people were compelled to settle elsewhere to create space for the new Bengali settlers resulting in widespread unrest. One reason the major parties supported Bengalisation was that the CHT is a strategically important region with resource riches that they believe should not be held hostage to indigenous insurgents who might one day decide to work with India (Braithwaite and D'Costa 349). Under the favoured regulations of President Ziaur Rahman and H.M. Ershad, a large-scale relocation of those impacted by erosion in Sandwip and Kutubdia occurred between 1975 and 1986. Maj. General Manzoor, the GOC of Chittagong and the commander of the counterinsurgency operation in the CHT, played an instrumental role in the planning and implementation of the Bengali settlement in the CHT under full military authority. Successive governments all tactically supported the military's policy of Bengalisation of the CHT through state assisted transmigration of Bengali settlers (Braithwaite and D'Costa 349). Bengalis were furthermore, provided with financial support and materials to build new homes and plots of land to support themselves through agriculture. Even with restrictions, the non-hill population in the hill tracts

had been rising due to the growth of trade with the main land, land grabbing, and often illegal settlement in the forestlands at the convenience of government officials (Choudhury 135). Thus, it can be identified that the primary objective of these so-called development initiatives in CHT was to increase the political and economic strength of the Bengali elites, military, and government; with no intention to empower indigenous communities at the grassroots level in their own region.

2.3 Migration as a Rite of Passage

Most indigenous students relocate to Dhaka and Chittagong primarily to pursue education as all of the acclaimed educational institutions and headquarters of job sectors are centralized in these urban areas. Indigenous parents send their children to schools and colleges in Dhaka, Chittagong, Savar, Gazipur, Khulna or Mymensingh where they can attain quality education if they are able to afford educational and living expenses for several years of schooling. Most of them (56.8%) are from Rangamati, 34% from Khagrachari and only 9.2% are from Bandarban district, with 44.8% of students completed secondary education and 33.4% completed higher secondary level (Chakma and Akhy). While others relocate to urban areas to pursue tertiary education, there is a jarring absence of accredited universities in CHT with only three high-level institutions like Bandarban University, Rangamati Science and Technology University and Rangamati Medical College.

Indigenous students are heavily marginalised in terms of gaining access to quality education in the CHT as the curricula exclusively uses Bengali as the medium of instruction and the unequal socio-economic circumstances result in the inability to afford the exorbitant cost of education for people living in dangerous and politically conflicted areas. Academic institutions do not effectively promote indigenous languages creating a systematic barrier in learning for indigenous students, which creates social identity crisis and exclusion (Talukdar

et al. 324) with them. Even at primary educational levels, no official initiatives were made to provide instruction to the indigenous minorities in their native language. The issue of language discrimination shows that educational and employment disparities created a language-based discriminating environment that delegitimizes indigenous languages, prioritising only Bangla or English as the standard language of learning (Talukdar et al. 325). Challenged with a number of obstructions to their pursuit of learning, including inadequate infrastructure and academic facilities, lack of qualified instructors and accredited academic institutions and universities provided limited prospective for academic progression in CHT. Especially after the construction of Kaptai Dam in 1962, migration of Chakma population for pursuing education has become more common (Visser and Gerharz 374). Supporting that indigenous people consider pursuing education in urban areas is recognized as a means of achieving literacy, upward social mobility and to escape marginalisation.

Furthermore, the quota system is an effective step for equitable development; however, the number of places reserved for Paharis in higher education system is not sufficient enough to provide progressive opportunities (Chakma 173). The most recent initiative introduced by the Bangladesh educational system has been to support indigenous children's rights to learn in their native language up to the primary level. Uchacha-A Chak argues that, "Textbooks published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) exclude indigenous histories within the syllabus content and inaccurately represents indigenous cultures and practices". For example, the removal of the word 'adivasi' from the back cover of class 9 textbook reflects the continual act of systematic erasure towards indigenous identities in the academic curricula. Considering distinct cultural identities, the absence of culturally inclusive teaching methods are often overlooked by the educational institutions and Ministry of Education (MoE). Understanding these issues is crucial for creating an inclusive learning environment and reforming educational strategies nationwide to fully integrate indigenous

students into the curriculums. This marginalisation perpetuates educational inequities, where the unique knowledge systems, language and cultural practices of indigenous are either inadequately addressed or entirely absent from mainstream education (Mawa 1330).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Methodological Framework

This section explains the location, sampling, data collection, analytical methods and theoretical lens used in the study. As the study focuses on the effects of epistemic violence and systemic discrimination on indigenous students in urban areas, it involves two locations: one from which the indigenous students come and the city away from home, where they live and spend a considerable time pursuing higher studies. It is important to clarify that, there are dozens of indigenous communities originating from plain land districts such as Rajshahi, Barishal, Sylhet, Netrokona, Mymensingh. However, this research is specifically concentrated towards indigenous students originating from Chittagong Hill Tracts that consists of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari districts through a cross-sectional study incorporating students from multiple indigenous communities as the subjects to acquire relevant data from diverse perspectives. The experience of systematic erasure of indigenous languages and cultures was supplemented by data collected from the student interviewees. To explore the identity crises and cultural displacement faced by indigenous students in Bangladesh, this research adopts a qualitative approach.

The data have been collected using both primary and secondary research. First, this paper follows a qualitative auto-ethnographic research approach as the author herself is an indigenous student who relocated to Dhaka for seeking education in an English Medium school. Personal experiences of the author have been incorporated as evidence of this study. The research also heavily prioritised incorporating narratives from other indigenous students as well to avoid overtly personalised narratives solely derived from the author. Second, as the primary source of the research, semi-structured interviews with 12 indigenous students from Bawm, Marma, Lushai, Chakma, Tanchangya, Rakhine, Pangkhua and Tripura communities were conducted to obtain relevant information about their perspectives and experiences in

urban spaces and educational institutions as an empirical data. The diverse range of backgrounds surrounding their socioeconomic status, educational curriculum, field of study and tertiary institutions supplemented a more nuanced understanding of their experiences while providing credibility to this research.

3.2 List of Student Respondents with Demographic Details

Location	Ethnicity	Male	Female
Dhaka	Bawm	0	1
	Tanchangya	0	1
	Chakma	0	2
	Rakhine	0	1
	Tripura	0	1
	Pangkhua	1	0
	Lushai	0	1
Chittagong	Bawm	1	1
	Marma	0	1
Shillong (North East India)	Bawm	1	0
Total	-	3	9

Table 1: Demographic profiles of the informants

Informants include nine females and three males, aged between 20 to 26 years old. Indigenous students were selected primarily based on the level of education of those who are pursuing or have completed their undergraduate degree. This inevitably led to the second variable, which

is having extended exposure to living in non-indigenous, urban areas, Dhaka or Chittagong in this case. Even if there is a mixed number of students living in Chittagong and Dhaka, mostly when it comes to indigenous students the discursive practices that we see in these two sectors are somewhat similar. Among these individuals, one respondent has experience of living in multiple cities including Bandarban, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Gazipur, Dhaka and is currently pursuing his undergraduate degree at a university in Shillong, Northeast India. Additionally, two other interviewees have already completed their undergraduate degree and are currently full-time employees.

3.3 Data Collection

To strengthen the insights drawn from primary data, expert interviews were conducted with prominent Bengali and indigenous activists, authors and researchers, particularly those who are deeply engaged in academic and advocacy work focusing indigenous identity and human rights, nationalism, social justice and transnational activist networks. This methodology facilitated the acquisition of profound insights from both Bengali and indigenous viewpoints to gain a nuanced understanding on CHT indigenous related issues. Participants were selected using a mixed methodical approach of snowball sampling of the experts having a considerable amount of knowledge and experience and students who have lived in urban areas for educational purposes. Interviews were conducted within a duration of 40 minutes to 90 minutes. Respondents were permitted to use any language they felt comfortable speaking. The author conducted interviews in three languages; English, Bangla and Bawm. Most interviews were conducted online while some were in person semi-structured interviews with predetermined questions prepared by the author prior to the interview. Additionally, open ended questions and probing questions were also included using an interactive dialogue

technique that provided flexibility in the flow of conversation allowing participants to express themselves.

The study involved secondary research with relevant secondary data to gather an intensive and comprehensive data using numerous books, academic journals, research papers, scholarly articles and newspaper articles from The Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune, New Age BD, The Financial Express, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and Amnesty International.

3.4 Theoretical Lens

To understand and articulate the nature of the cultural displacement and identity crisis faced by the indigenous students, the paper uses Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of 'epistemic violence' and Michel Foucault's theory of 'power and knowledge'. This section covers how I have aligned these theoretical lenses into my study. In her essay titled "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*", literary theorist and critic Spivak originally coined the term 'epistemic violence', to describe a process by which the capacity of subaltern groups to construct their own epistemologies is systemically disregarded and silenced by the dominant group (Spivak 76). The term refers to the institutional or cultural erasure inflicted on marginalised groups socially, economically or politically by erasing their identities, beliefs and knowledge. This is specifically not a physical violence but harms the marginalised community inertly by devaluing their identity, language, culture and epistemological systems through exclusion and control of knowledge. In relevance to this study, the dominant group refers to Bengali population and the marginalised subaltern group refers to indigenous students. The clearest example of epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other (Spivak 76). This study will conceptualise how the stigmatisation of indigenous food and sartorial bias towards indigenous traditional attires systematically effaced

indigenous cultures from the mainstream discourse, which exemplifies Spivak's concept of epistemic violence. Furthermore, the exclusion of indigenous languages and history by the educational system impacts the academic performance, self-esteem and social belonging of indigenous students. This highlights the epistemic violence that systematically silences marginalised subjectivities, as indigenous students strive to nurture Bangla language more than their mother tongue. While personal and collective internalised feelings of inferiority encourage them to assimilate and become more adaptive towards Bengali culture but creates distance between indigenous people and their cultural identity. Hence, indigenous students who relocate to Dhaka and Chittagong for higher education commonly find themselves divided between two worlds: having to conform to the dominant Bengali culture and being compelled to downplay their ancestral culture, which is deeply disorienting. Institutionalised dominance of Bengali culture coupled with only city-centric development practices devalues and gradually push indigenous knowledge, culture, language and traditional practices into disuse. This, in turn, makes displacement an unavoidable part of the life trajectory of aspirational indigenous youth as possible means for attaining success in life.

These systematic structures displayed by educational institutions play a very important role here, as we will also analyse French theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault's study on the interconnectedness of knowledge and power established in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Foucault examines how contemporary academic institutions such as universities, colleges and schools utilize knowledge as a tool for exercising power, dominance and influence on the collective society to discipline marginalised individuals through subtle domination on their cognitive knowledge. His framework offers critical insights regarding the principles governing societal structures and regulation of societal behaviours. Foucault's theory is relevant, in understanding how the Bangladesh educational system operated by the dominant power of majority Bengalis play a significant role in shaping indigenous epistemologies which directly

impacts indigenous students' academic performances and social integration. For example, misrepresentation and elimination of indigenous culture and history in textbooks and the exclusion of indigenous languages learning by the academic curriculum involves the imposition of dominant knowledge systems on minorities. Additionally, his analysis is widely applicable for demonstrating the construction of dominant Bengali authority through control of power and knowledge by the institutionalisation of educational curricula that have led to the normalised delegitimizing indigenous knowledge systems and identities. The construction of knowledge and are intertwined, playing a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of social control and the formation of knowledge in constructing individual identities and societal norms.

Having outlined my research tools, I shall move on to discuss how the cultural disintegration and epistemic violence affect the indigenous students. The study identifies three major areas—language, identity and indigenous culture—as being the most adversely affected, of which I shall begin with the first, the suppression of indigenous languages.

Chapter 4: Silent Struggles of Language Suppression

Language serves as the catalyst for cultural knowledge and the fundamental element of intangible cultural heritage that binds us to our mother tongue and identity. It functions as the primary means of communication facilitating the dissemination and preservation of indigenous intergenerational cultural knowledge through oral tradition. Yet, ironically, Bangladesh has one of the most hegemonic and chauvinistic language policies (Mohsin 157). While promoting Bangla as the state language, the nation became exclusionary towards indigenous languages through systematic discrimination. This chapter extensively discusses the prevalence of systematic and institutionalised erosion of native indigenous languages in the facilitation of educational systems in Bangladesh and the negative impact created on indigenous students in terms of academic performance, social belonging and their self-esteem.

4.1 Exclusion of Indigenous Languages in Educational Curricula

The Government of Bangladesh made no attempts to uphold the significance of indigenous languages or widely accessible for learning since Bangla was declared as the state language of Bangladesh after the Language Movement of 1952. This is because Bangladesh identifies itself with Bangla or Bengali and has imposed its notions and categories of identification, development and education upon its non-Bengali population (Mohsin 157). One additional strategy of systematic erasure by the process of epistemic violence is the silencing and mutation of indigenous languages in the national discourse and dissemination of indigenous knowledge systems in educational sectors as discussed in Spivak's theory. This section discusses the structural delegitimization and exclusionary practice towards native indigenous languages within the mainstream and educational system, which gradually invalidates the epistemological systems through erasure of indigenous languages.

Thirty-five indigenous languages are still spoken in Chittagong Hill Tracts as they have been revived and interpreted by indigenous scholars throughout generations, but many still remain on the brink of becoming endangered or language death. The usage of mother tongue is also facing extinction after migration in plain land (Chakma and Akhy 275). Indigenous people's rights to learn their mother tongue is undermined by the state's predication on the linguistic identity of the dominant Bengali population. The linguistic hegemony of Bangla language has led to the extinction and endangerment of numerous indigenous languages. State sponsorship of the Bengali language, and the gradual erosion of indigenous language and hence identity, can be considered a symbol of the hegemony of the Bangladesh state (Chakma 30). The silent erosion of indigenous languages gradually distorts indigenous ways of learning and practising their own mother tongue. This argument is supplemented with theoretical insights of 'knowledge and power' conceptualised by Foucault in relevance to this research through the examination of how language and knowledge are manipulated by dominant power to shape indigenous knowledge systems as a result of power-driven discourses.

According to a survey conducted by Kapaeeng Foundation and International Labour Organization concentrating on twenty five indigenous groups under the project titled "Improving indigenous and tribal people's access to justice and development through community based monitoring", results showed that 92% of the respondents stated their language is at a vulnerable state of becoming extinct, 4% agreed their language is critically endangered and the remaining 4% have claimed their native language is already extinct (Murmu). Only eighteen indigenous languages of Bangladesh are available in written forms. The linguistic survey reported by International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) has identified 14 endangered languages including Munari, Matto, Kheyng, Khumi, Kol, Chak, Pangkhua, Laleng, Lushai, Khariya, Shoura, Koda, Kando and Rangmitca with an estimated number of less than 10000 native speakers. Among these, Rangmitca language spoken by the Mro people

is on the verge of extinction with only three native speakers remaining in Bandarban. The National Committee proposed to include 50 indigenous communities in the “Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institutes Act of 2010” gazette. In response to this, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs implemented this Act to include 50 indigenous communities instead of 27 which included; Bawm, Barman, Bagdi, Banai, Baraik, Bedia, Bhil, Bhumij, Dalu, Garo, Gorait, Gurkha, Ganju, Hodi, Ho, Hajong, Koch, Kole, Khasi, Khyang, Khumi, Kurmi Mahato, Koda, Kora, Kharia, Kharwar, Lohar, Lusai, Monipuri, Marma, Malpahari, Munda, Mro, Malo, Mahali, Mushor, Oraon, Patro, Rajowar, Rakhine, Santal, Sabar, Tanchangya, Tripura, Teli and Turi (Murmu). In urban areas, the majority of indigenous students lose the connection and fluency of their native language. This eventually results in language death for smaller indigenous communities who are less in number such as Lushai and Pangkhua. When a language is no longer preserved, it tends to die along with the last speaker. With the death of language, thoughts, culture and most importantly the history of a people is lost forever (Alim).

Foucault’s theory asserts that knowledge is formed by discourses that are influenced by established power structures of dominant authority, strongly claiming that power and knowledge are inextricably connected. The theory of ‘power and knowledge’ states that it helps us in understanding how power relations intersect with other forms of oppression and domination such as gender, race and class (Foucault 320). His study is applicable in this case to understand how academic institutions construct subjectivities on the alienated, marginalised, subordinated shaping identities based on the current power structure. The CHT Peace Accord has mandated the implementation of indigenous languages in primary education to solve this issue. As a result, the state introduced a national education policy in 2010, implementing publication of textbooks in five indigenous languages; Chakma, Tripura, Marma, Garo and Sadri and distributed in schools across CHT in 2017, but it has not yet standardised indigenous languages into the higher educational curriculum. Many indigenous parents and children were

hopeful with this initiative but due to a shortage of qualified indigenous instructors, the teaching of indigenous languages in school curriculum continues to be disregarded. Indigenous languages are not taught effectively as the teachers have either not received any prior formal training or some receive training for only seven days. Oftentimes, corrupt practices result in the appointment of unqualified and incompetent teachers depriving primary indigenous children of attaining a quality education and encounters systematic barriers in education due to linguistic differences between their native language and the Bangla used as the institutional medium of education (Dewan). Pervasive corruption in the CHT's administration, especially in the recruitment of primary school teachers has further worsened the situation. Indigenous language teaching is allegedly less prioritised compared to other subjects as they are scheduled to be taught during recess or tiffin breaks only. Publishing books in five indigenous languages is insufficient, moreover the most imperative concern is to ensure all indigenous students are able to learn their languages effectively. Non-inclusive textual materials foster linguistic barriers, making it challenging for thousands of low-income indigenous students to obtain an effective education or any kind of education at all.

Most indigenous children learn their mother tongue orally from an early age; without knowing how to read or write because they are not introduced to scripted alphabets. Therefore, without any formal instruction, indigenous children could only acquire the competencies necessary to speak native languages informally within their own households. Unavailability of indigenous languages in documented form drastically impacts the cultural knowledge of present and future generations. Young indigenous people's linguistic proficiency falls short of that of their predecessors (Rahman). While attending primary, secondary and university level-education, students have a relative disadvantage because of their limited linguistic competence in Bengali vis-a-vis their Bangladeshi Bengali peers thus creating a barrier, since a different

language, in the form of a dialect or a limited vocabulary, is an effective guarantee of a special social world that is not easily navigated by outsiders (Visser and Gerharz 378).

As the state language, only Bangla is deemed as the conventional language deserving of being taught and maintained in teaching. Hence entirely depending on Bangla language as the primary medium of communication which is cognitively demanding for indigenous students from the very beginning of their school years. This strongly illustrates Foucault's concept of power and knowledge, because the educational institutions governed by the dominant group in power determines Bangla as the only legitimate language of being educated while subjugating indigenous languages. The intellectual domination of Bengali and English language over neglected indigenous languages is creating such disparity between Bengali people and the indigenous people (Talukdar et al. 330). Dhaka University has several departments catered to teaching Bangla and other foreign languages. These designated departments include Department of Bangla, Department of Urdu, Department of Sanskrit, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Department of Japanese Studies and also the Institute of Modern Languages offering programs in learning a variety of modern languages such as Russian, German, Italian, Spanish, etc. There acquisition of foreign languages is beneficial but why is there a strong willingness to learn and teach foreign languages if no efforts are made to preserve the indigenous languages at the same time? Contrastingly, the absence of formal educational framework and institutionalised systems for indigenous language instruction mirrors a larger pattern of linguistic disparity within the mainstream reflecting the epistemic violence rooted in the system. The language barrier creates a disparity between Bengalis and indigenous students exacerbating lower socioeconomic mobility and hindering them from several opportunities of development and success.

“Receiving quality education till tertiary level is a far-fetched dream for many indigenous people, but it seems to be the right approach through which they can attain

a network of support and receive job opportunities after graduation and be able to generate personal incomes to lessen the economic burden on the family and development within the overall community”, as claimed by an indigenous activist and researcher Uchacha-A-Chak.

For every underrepresented minority community, a well-established strategy of escaping poverty and empowerment is by increasing literacy rate within its community. Equity is attained when indigenous students can study in mainstream institutions that offer them the curricular options, networks and professional skills while respecting and learning from their specific needs and traditional ways of knowing, speaking and living (Sanchez). The most severe impact of systematic exclusion towards indigenous languages in the mainstream and educational curriculum falls on indigenous students who start from a young age as shown in my findings, which will be further elaborated in the next section.

4.2 Impact of Language Discrimination: Understanding the Effects on Academic Performance, Self-Esteem and Social Belonging

This section will explore the effects of language discrimination by delving into how indigenous students often experience misunderstanding, bullying and become a subject of ridicule. As the respondents identify, my findings show this impact is more pronounced in their academic performance, self-esteem as social belonging. The academic curriculum contributes in the othering process of indigenous students through misrepresentation and exclusion, which gradually spills out in daily conversation as pointed out by respondents. Additionally, Spivak describes ‘subjugated knowledge’ as a whole set of knowledge that has been disqualified as inadequate located low down on the hierarchy (Spivak 76). According to Spivak’s theory in connection with indigenous language suppression, systematic erasure of indigenous languages by schools, universities, Ministry of Education and the mainstream media are examples of the

institutions function to convey knowledge but the language barrier marginalises indigenous students. Results of this study indicate that an overwhelming majority of indigenous students who spent most of their childhood or adolescent years living in urban areas for education are not proficient or fluent in their native language.

One can agree that structuralism formed the most systematic effort to evaluate the concept of the event, not only from ethnology, but a whole series of other sciences and in the extreme case from history (Foucault 114). In this regard, Foucault's theory also claims that the dissemination of indigenous knowledge systems is largely limited through structural erosion of indigenous languages in educational institutions and academic curricula, gradually undermining indigenous students' habit of practising their own mother tongue in real life. A Bawm respondent shared, "Since childhood even if we do not know our own indigenous language, learning Bangla is a necessity for us to succeed academically and also to maintain our survival in this country". His ability to learn Bawm language was limited since he did not get the opportunity to engage with other Bawm people as he spent the majority of his time in in Mymensingh, Chittagong, Gazipur and Dhaka for school and college. Another respondent shared that he faced extreme difficulties throughout his entire academic life understanding lessons in Bangla resulting in poor academic performance and is required to put more effort or depend on his Bengali friends who can explain the lessons to him. The reason why indigenous learners were not satisfied with their performances is because they cannot understand some of the lessons due to the language barrier (Buenaflor et al. 164).

Indigenous people in Bangladesh have lower literacy rate and the main impediments behind this are their language problem, which is affecting their per capita income and keeping them behind other Bengali people as it happened in East Pakistan, between West and East parts (Talukdar et al. 328). Compared to their Bengali classmates, indigenous students have lower school participation rates and drop out of school early as they are less likely to finish or enrol

in college or university. Only few receive the opportunity of pursuing tertiary education, although it is the ambition of many. Approximately 82% of indigenous children aged 5 to 16 attend school in the CHTs, but 65% drop out, with poor performance resulting from a language barrier and financial difficulties as majority are from illiterate and low-income households (Talukdar et al. 329). Low literacy rate and fewer opportunities for occupational advancement results in less possibilities for community advancement and health illiteracy. In comparison to the national average, Indigenous communities have a far lower literacy rate. In 2016, the overall national dropout rate was 19.2%, of which the CHT dominated 59% of it, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational and Information Statistics (Khaing). These data demonstrate that language becomes a marker of one's identity be it positive or negative. Foucault's theoretical discourse of power and knowledge claims to produce knowledge, wherein, power generates suppressed knowledge imposed by the dominant group, as reflected in my findings. Our society possesses yet another principle of exclusion; not another prohibition, but a division and a rejection (Foucault 216). Delegitimizing indigenous languages in educational curricula and epistemologies is a prominent example of how this functionalizes the knowledge of dominant groups to subjugate other alternative or indigenous forms of knowledge. Due to language discrimination, indigenous people are still backwards in terms of getting proper education and they cannot enter into a prestigious job in the employment sectors compared to majority Bengali speaking people (Talukdar et al. 326). They are left in a position where they are unable to escape the cycle of multifaceted poverty due to the series of deprivations they encounter along their academic journey.

The indigenous community believes that if they are kept within their native languages, they cannot be a part of the larger national language community in Bangladesh, as a result, they are actively engaged to learn national languages (Rahman). Hence, there is less emphasis in learning the native language and is spoken very rarely, creating a sociolinguistic gap on the

ability to communicate in native indigenous languages. Moreover, indigenous languages have been mixed with Bangla and English words, with 6.8% migrants use Bangla as an official language most of the time in a day, 11.6% respondents reported that they use language with family members in house and 20.8% children do not use mother tongue as a medium of communication (Chakma and Akhy 275). Most indigenous students have alarmingly lost the linguistic fluency of their native languages as they are more habituated to communicating in Bangla or English. Some are unable to name the alphabets, certain colours, fruits and vegetables in their own native language.

Students studying a second language frequently have trouble expressing themselves if they do not fully master the language and their capacity to learn may be hampered by the resulting mental stress (Buenaflor et al. 162). The loss of linguistic vocabulary has caused an intergenerational communication gap between the indigenous youth and their grandparents, making it tough for both sides to comprehend the same language, while interacting with each other. Older family members or community people raise questions about their failure to speak or comprehend native languages, as a form of taunting remark or disappointment. Foucault's concept on 'the regime of truth' establishes boundaries of legitimate knowledge and who is allowed to maintain it, thus limiting the opportunities of learning indigenous oral histories, literature and cultural values (Foucault 112). This creates detachment from practising their own native languages as they tend to forget certain vocabularies, and lose the ability to read, write and speak their mother tongue thus reflecting an institutional power that shapes indigenous knowledge systems. In addition to suppressing indigenous languages, this also inhibits indigenous ways of learning, remembering and responding to the world around them. An experience shared by one of the respondents further supports these arguments.

A Marma student shared that, “I speak in broken Marma language and consistently switch between Bangla or English to express myself accurately as I do not know certain terminology and vocabulary in Marma. For example, I do not know the vocabularies of simple words like ‘brown colour’ or ‘sunflower’ in my mother tongue”.

As Foucault claims, institutions serve the interests of the dominant power to suppress and erase the knowledge systems. Similarly, this dynamic reflects the experiences of indigenous students who are systematically hindered from nurturing their own language. Formation of knowledge must remain a secret “not because of an element of infamy that might attach to its object, but because of the need to hold it in the greatest reserve, since according to tradition, it would lose its effectiveness and its virtue by being divulged (Foucault 48). Apart from the impacts on academic performance, exclusionary practices towards indigenous languages spill into real life interactions as indigenous students are misjudged or bullied for speaking in native languages in front of Bengali's peers or in public. Such prejudiced behaviour often undermines their self-esteem, making them feel underconfident to speak native languages in the public as a subject of ridicule. Additionally, this problem is further exacerbated when Bengali students ridicule indigenous peers for mispronouncing certain Bengali words such as “sisu for shishu” (child), “shushur for shoushur” (in laws), “basa for bhasha” (language), not sounding like an actual Bengali or speaking Bangla in a local Pahari accent, greatly diminishing their self-esteem. The system is so deeply concentrated into the maintenance of Bangla that they had to change their ways of communicating by speaking Bangla more often than necessary or fully avoid speaking in native languages to avoid being alienated. If there is no adequate arrangement to educate the children of the indigenous communities speaking those languages, then they would in course of time forget their mother tongue and adopt the dominant speech of the broader society, Bangla (Alim).

As one of the informants confirms, the fear of being singled out and ridiculed adds to the already existing stress for forced assimilation to desperately integrate with the mainstream. Additionally, they are often stared at awkwardly or harassed publicly by some Bengali passersby who demean indigenous languages blatantly by mimicking words such as ‘ching chong’, ‘ching chang’, ‘ching ku pang’, ‘rohingya’, ‘chinese’ etc. Another respondent revealed she feels uncomfortable and insecure speaking in Bawm language with fellow Bawm friends around Bengali peers as they assume she is gossiping or talking negatively about them in her own language. Using indigenous languages often creates a misunderstanding which creates an adverse effect on their social belonging. She is coerced by her Bengali peers to speak Bangla instead or translate so that they can understand what she is talking about. It becomes a label that the student then imbibes, making them conscious of the judgement it will invoke, eventually deterring them to speak native languages in social settings. They have to silently endure the feeling of discomfort to freely speak native languages within public spaces. The imposition to use only Bengali goes beyond institutional setting. What aggravates matters for the indigenous students is the popular perception regarding their mother tongue. The consequence is not only the hindrance of diversity; but more dangerously so, the silencing of indigenous voices and the creation of High culture within the state; while the rest are relegated to the periphery and the other languages are referred to as dialects (Mohsin 162). Therefore, highlighting a broader issue that language can become an oppressive tool to silence, ridicule and socially exclude indigenous students as they are barred from normally speaking or learning their mother tongue leading to an identity crisis.

Chapter 5: The (Un)Willing Cultural Amnesia

Indigenous communities share some common ground in terms of festivals, food habits, traditional attire and cultivation practices, all of these have contributed to the development of a collective shared identity as ‘indigenous’ despite certain cultural differences. Collective practices and features including Jum cultivation, food, attires, housing and physical appearances, together distinguish the indigenous peoples from the Muslim Bengali population (Chakma 24). Culture distinguishes one community from another that almost likely results in division and devaluation of culture in one territory and also calls for cultural battle inside a country or can change or influence the culture directly or passively (Rosy 90). Indigenous traditions and customary practices such as wearing traditional clothes, eating or cooking traditional meals struggle to find their place in urban areas as indigenous youths engage within Bengali predominated society. It seems as if the institutionalised systems in Bangladesh portray that indigenous cultures are meant to be suppressed and forgotten. The denial of self-determination deprives Indigenous people of their identity and rights, where state and military play an important role to control the region through different development processes rarely giving attention of indigenous cultures (Rosy 88). This chapter examines the implications of cultural assimilation amounting to the willing or unwilling cultural amnesia among indigenous students by concentrating on the resentment and sartorial bias towards indigenous traditional food and attire.

In the mainstream discourse, overt and visible kinds of violence are discussed commonly; however, epistemic violence ‘exerted in subtle forms’ remains unaddressed. Spivak’s study on epistemic violence is relevant to the study of this chapter covering the unwilling and willing cultural amnesia experienced by young indigenous students. The phenomenon of epistemic violence is political, ethical and epistemological in nature controlling everything from institutions, mainstream media, law and order, behavioural actions of the body

and mind of the oppressor and the ones who are oppressed. In the same way, stigmatisation towards indigenous food and traditional clothes cultivate an epistemic violence through an imposition of Bengali culture as indigenous people are subdued to maintain the dominant culture instead, as explained by Spivak's theory.

It is important to necessitate the effort of understanding and be conscious of the long-standing tradition and cultural significance of indigenous food, festivals, attires, etc. rather than just merely absorbing in the surface level of indigenous cultures and their celebrations. Creating the picturesqueness of CHT materializes tourism as a possible means of local development that is a consistent factor of monetising indigenous food and attire. Jum cultivation system through the introduction of commercial plantations, and the undermining of indigenous dress and language patterns, now being replaced by the mainstream Bengali alternatives (Chakma 30). Additionally, this intentional negligence and unwillingness to respect the value and relevance of minority cultures reinforces the colonial attitudes of supremacy and extremism as the primary reasons for stigmatised perspectives. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme (Spivak 82). Stereotypical narratives endorse insensitive misconceptions, cultural misrepresentations and exoticisation towards indigenous traditions that are later imposed on indigenous students. Such behaviour formulates a nuanced explanation of epistemic violence claiming that subalterns are subjugated by the bourgeois-nationalist elitists and colonialists through imposition of colonial narratives and erasure of their subjectivity by defining them as the 'other' as theorised by Spivak. As a result, indigenous students become more reluctant and apprehensive to adhere to the traditional way of life in urban spheres.

5.1 Stigmatisation of Indigenous Food Culture

The microaggressions towards indigenous food habits encourages subtle but continuous social exclusion and low self-esteem of indigenous students making them feel shameful and uncomfortable to eat their traditional food. This section examines microaggression in the form of subtle unintentional or intentional behaviour translating into hostile and derogatory narratives about indigenous traditional food items and eating habits.

There are forms of violence that can be central to the experience of marginalised individuals, not only because they affect them in their epistemic exchanges, but also because the imbalance they cause in the social system feeds other types of violence and exclusion (Perez 1). According to Spivak, “general, non-specialist”, “the illiterate peasantry”, “the tribals” and the “lowest strata of the urban subproletariat” are the populations who are silenced by epistemic violence. This argument deeply resonates with the kind of microaggressions imposed on indigenous students in terms of traditional food. When Chakma student migrants arrive in Dhaka, they deal with stereotypes about indigenous people from the CHT that are linked to their cultural practices, food habit (Visser and Gerharz 378). Contrastingly, Bengalis are free to eat anything they want, however indigenous students have to remain conscious about social scrutiny regarding the slightest difference in taste or habits; such as what neighbours will think about the smell of curries and the type of food they are allowed to cook within their households.

Indigenous people from CHT find delight in traditional meals mainly consisting of fermented shrimp paste (nappi), dried shrimp and fish (shutki mach), boiled meat such as pork and chicken and vegetables with minimal seasoning. Some Bengalis perceive these items as ‘too gross’, ‘smelly’, labelling indigenous students as ‘weird and uncivilized’ for eating such items. Therefore, very systematically and purposefully, the constitution has endorsed the sense of superiority of the majority and allowed room to exoticize the indigenous culture in the mainstream representation (Chakma). As mirrored by Spivak’s concept, this epistemic

approach targets indigenous students through micro-invalidating, whereby explicit bigotry based or stereotypical narratives are used to demean the type of food indigenous people consume. This study has found that drastically changing their customary eating habits and food choices was one of the toughest challenges of adapting to the urban environment for indigenous students. Historically, eating habits of indigenous communities have traditionally relied on food items that are easily sourced like locally grown fruits and vegetables from Jum cultivation grown by themselves or purchased from the local market. Another student highlighted an issue that Jum vegetables are rarely sold in selective places by indigenous vendors around Dhaka in Kazipara, Mirpur and Golapbag and Chittagong with prices exceeding student budgets, such as 600tk per kg of dried shrimp.

One major reason for adapting into Bengali culture is to avoid social stigma and public rejection such as derogatory remarks targeted intentionally or unintentionally from Bengali peers and neighbours surrounding eating habits which are different to Bengali preferences. Several respondents claimed that renting apartments in cities comes with strict guidelines imposed by Bengali landlords who forbid consumption or cooking ‘pahari food’ inside the house, referring to nappi and shutki, or they will be forced to vacate from the premises. Many indigenous students living in shared apartments or hostels remain extra cautious to assimilate within Bengali customs by adapting to Bengali cuisines while giving up traditional food to avoid being subjected to micro aggressions. Another respondent also reinforced that traditional food is an integral part of her being and how it was extremely difficult to alter daily food choices. After coming to Dhaka, the most difficult challenge was abandoning her favourite traditional food items such as shrimp paste (nappi) and dry fish because her Bengali flatmates were not accustomed to its taste or odour. Although common and much loved among Bengalis too nowadays, the microaggressions translate into hostile and negative expressions which either compel or pressurise indigenous students to change their food choices and social

behaviour. She refrained from consuming traditional food items while residing in the dorms fearing that she would be mocked or criticised.

On one such occasion, Bengali students went so far as to complain to the dorm supervisor for reheating dried fish curry in the oven, a respondent shared. In urban areas, availability of alternative food choices for simple, boiled or healthy options catered to indigenous people's taste buds is curtailed. Indigenous students refrain themselves from cooking traditional meals and switch to Bengali curries or fried food that require lots of spices which is completely different from their taste preferences. Moreover, the indigenous tribes of Bangladesh have their own traditional recipes, cooking techniques and ingredients that have been passed down through generations (Shovon). The distinct flavour of indigenous cuisines are largely dissimilar from the taste of Bengali cuisines, that are difficult to get used to for most indigenous people. These cooking habits contribute to the process of identity construction of indigenous people in the CHT (Chakma 24).

Many indigenous students have claimed that on the first day of class or even when they are engaging in a friends' group, they encounter culturally insensitive questions about eating habits such as "Aren't you from the jungle? You eat such weird food" or "You are a pahari, don't you eat all kinds of animals such as bats, insects, frogs, snakes and dogs?". For students, this kind of racial stereotyping challenges their perception of themselves as Bangladeshis living in the nation's capital and engaging in its educational institutions (Visser and Gerharz 378). Phenomena of widespread social media usage in Bangladesh have transformed online platforms such as Facebook and TikTok into malignant spaces as some Bengalis comment with disparaging narratives about indigenous food. Such generalisations often contain offensive undertones intended to ridicule through demeaning comments on the internet. There is a misconception that all indigenous people consume 'the most unusual food' like insects, worms, frogs, dogs, pork and wine, which are considered taboo in the Bengali Muslim culture. A

Marma student stated that one textbook used during her class in grade 7 contained an incorrect generalised statement which claimed, “Wine is the staple food of Marma people”. Such derogatory claims printed in state-approved textbooks tends to misinform students, while also reinforcing internalised stigma on the ones targeted. This becomes more harmful for indigenous students to deal with when such disparaging remarks expressed in books or online platforms are spilled into real-life interactions. Accordingly, this diffused form of violence will be understood not as an action or an event, but rather as a form of social relationships characterized by the denial of the other, that is, the historically and socially located denial of subjectivity, legitimacy or existence of another individual or community, as argued by Spivak.

In her essay, Spivak also discussed how the British colonial codification of the Hindu Law perpetuated epistemic violence by reducing diverse cultural practices into controllable forms for colonial rule. This reflects a broader reality of how colonizers and those in power impose epistemic violence as indigenous students are subjected to bigotry and judgement based on religion in the same way. Religious hegemony is taken as a concern since Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country inhabited by 98% of the population practicing Islam as a religion. For example, indigenous people consume pork and some drink wine; however, they are criticised by their Bengali peers because it is forbidden in Muslim religion. One respondent claimed that during the month of Ramadan, some Bengali students pass disparaging remarks by questioning her “why are you eating during the day instead of fasting?”. As Spivak conceptualised how this reveals a power inequality and systemic pressure in which the dominant Bengali population does not feel the need to accept or understand the culture of minorities leading to the erasure of indigenous cultures by disregarding their food customs. As pointed out by respondents, even subtle microaggressions that are meant to judge or ridicule traditional food items causes resentment and discomfort towards their own traditional cuisines rendering them apprehensive about eating them on a daily basis.

5.2 Sartorial Bias of Indigenous Traditional Attire

Wearing traditional attire is a means of cultural expression and enables indigenous people to honour their tradition and identity. Indigenous men and women proudly wear intricately crafted traditional garments, reflecting relentless dedication and skilled craftsmanship of local indigenous weavers. Each piece of traditional garment is considered a highly valuable asset whether purchased, gifted or inherited as a family heirloom conveying stories of their ancestral culture. For example, weaving with ‘Bain’ and Chakma inspired motifs on traditional garments is believed to empower women and girls with positive qualities and spiritual worth in Chakma culture. An indigenous person can be distinguished as a representative of a certain tribe through traditional outfits from a single piece of clothing to an entire ensemble of artifacts. Indigenous traditional attires are vastly different from the traditional attires of Bengali majorities who wear saree, salwar kameez and panjabi. Traditional attires are usually donned during religious celebrations, cultural festivals, community gatherings, traditional wedding ceremonies or while visiting places of worship such as church or Buddhist temples. In the CHT region, indigenous women and young girls also wear thami or puan (lower skirt) inside their households. However, this independence becomes constrained in urban areas. Living in urban cities confer limited opportunities to dress traditionally because of the lack of indigenous sociocultural events. In a country so rich in cultural diversity, Bengali nationalism and the dominant presence of Muslim identity has transformed into an exclusionary force in marginalising indigenous attires. This section delves into the sartorial bias towards indigenous traditional attires to understand why indigenous students disregard traditional attires in urban areas as it involves several dynamics as an interplay between growing insecurity and the pressure to assimilate.

Indigenous youths are more exposed to Bengali centred cultural and religious celebrations such as Pohela Falgun, Boishakh, Eid and Durga Puja, etc. presenting opportunities to adorn Bengali traditional attire that is deemed appropriate for the occasions.

Educational institutions observe Bengali and other foreign cultures, such as Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Week hosted in BRAC University. Immense under-representation of indigenous cultural or religious festivals and are not observed by educational institutions, as claimed by respondents. This illustrates Foucault's concept, as educational institutions validate disciplinary form of power to normalise dismissal towards indigenous cultures. During a cultural function hosted at her college once, a respondent performed a Bawm traditional dance dressed in traditional clothing. Apart from this, there were no other occasions to wear traditional attire at her college. Respondents have further admitted that wearing sarees and salwar kameez on a regular basis or even during cultural events has made them feel more socially included within the peer group and overall mainstream Bengali society. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme (Spivak 82). They feel insecure to wear traditional clothes in fear of receiving negative reactions, such as subtle or overt forms of glares. Hence, they avoid wearing any pieces such as thami, that easily identifies them as indigenous as it may transform into a source of vulnerability making them apprehensive to dress in their traditional garments, further isolating themselves from their own culture.

Indigenous traditional attires are mostly exoticized as an emblem of aestheticism and appropriate for festivals and cultural performances instead of accepting it as daily normal wear. Media representations and commercial marketplaces promote a sartorial bias favouring Bengali traditional attire while invisibilising indigenous attires. According to the results of this study, 70% of respondents claim to have been judged or mocked by Bengali peers or the public. Hence, indigenous girls and women wear saree, salwar kameez, kurti or willingness to adopt trendy Western attires by younger generations is also another factor to avoid the social stigma and cultural alienation. Secondly, the pressure to assimilate into Bengali culture remains an important consideration as Bengali attire is considered more appropriate and modest. In

connection to the devaluation of indigenous traditional attires in the urban areas, Foucault's arguments are applicable as such discursive practices are directly connected with power politics and inevitably lead to a power imbalance highlighting the devaluation of indigenous traditional attires. Foucault's concept agrees that, like ideology and hegemony, subjects firmly believe what is asserted on them because it enables them to belong, be included and improves their well-being as evidenced by data collected from respondents. Therefore, very systematically and purposefully, the constitution has endorsed the sense of superiority of the majority and allowed room to exoticize the indigenous cultures in the mainstream representation (Chakma).

Over the last few decades, multiple socio-political issues propagated as a tool for prejudice also stands as another factor. The recent communal attacks in Khagrachari's Dighinala Upazila in September 2024 and another incident of mob attack on indigenous protesters at Shahbagh, Dhaka in January 2025 during a peaceful demonstration following the removal of the word "adivasi" from the NCTB textbook cover page exacerbated immense controversy. Iftekharuzzaman added that the NCTB, along with those opposing the self-identification of indigenous communities as "indigenous" in Bangladesh, is continuing the legacy of authoritarian governments (*The Daily Star*). This caused extreme levels of prejudice and propaganda and hatred towards indigenous communities in public spaces and social media. Such recurring incidents urge indigenous students to downplay their identities due to the growing fear of being attacked in public as a concern for safety and precaution. Increasing incidences of assault especially targeted at indigenous women instilled more awareness as a means of protection. In such situations, they feel more vulnerable than empowered wearing their traditional attire where they are singled out as a minority. It is all encompassed within the behaviour that also happens by default to some extent, due to indigenous people's fear and lack of opposition to defend themselves. Rather than questioning and challenging the

misconception, they have learned to accept and endure in silence through compromising cultural expression.

To aggravate matters further, dressing traditionally is sometimes associated with poverty, illiteracy and old-fashioned resulting from the perceptions of class dynamics and internalised views of modernity. In public, educated indigenous women increasingly wear Muslim Bengali attire, leaving their traditional ‘pinon-hadi’ and ‘thami’ dresses at home, on the other hand men are also changing their pattern of public dress to mainstream Muslim Bengali attire (Chakma 29). As one female respondent points out, “I face discomfort every time a Bengali person passes a comment at me when I am dressed in traditional Marma attire. They also question why I am not carrying an orna with it”. Regardless of the motive, what follows can be seen as a willing amnesia inculcated within the mainstream society, but deliberately ignored because it is indigenous related issues. This discursive apathy inevitably creates cultural displacement and significantly impacts the sense of identity towards indigenous roots. One of the respondents revealed that he is consumed by uneasiness to display his Bawm culture anywhere with traditional attire as he is more concerned about the stereotypical comments that are associated with ‘backwardness’ or other inappropriate undertones such as ‘jungle man’. Therefore, it is not only about a growing sense of insecurity but they intend to escape from the harassment and unwanted attention that comes with wearing traditional clothes. Even if such remarks are not motivated by ill intent, sometimes the discursive institutionalisation takes place and results in forgetting indigenous cultures and negatively impacts the self-esteem and social belonging of indigenous students.

Chapter 6: Bengali Nationalism and the Indigenous Identity Crisis

Bangladesh is being led by monolithic nationalism and identity (Jahan 5). Throughout history, the subject of claiming indigenous identity has been a contentious one, reflecting an ongoing struggle for recognition in Bangladesh. Assimilation of Bengali culture and the transformation into Bengalis, which was proposed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was regarded as a way to overcome backwardness and adapt to a more modern lifestyle (Visser and Gerharz 370). Although aimed towards national unity, indigenous people were further marginalized and reduced to religious minorities. In this chapter, I will examine how Bengali nationalistic values play a major role in disempowering and exclusion towards indigenous minorities causing identity crisis.

6.1 Struggle with Recognition of Indigenous Identity

This section explores the long-standing socio-political conflict with the recognition of indigenous people throughout history and contemporary times in the national narrative resulting in an identity crisis. In 1993, Bangladesh National Party (BNP) government denied the existence of indigenous people by stating there are “no indigenous people” in Bangladesh. The refusal to observe Year of the Indigenous People (1993) by the said government or announce the first International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1995-2004) as mandated by the United Nations further justifies this claim. As Foucault’s theory indicates, dominant group exercises their power to control state narratives gradually fragmenting indigenous identities. The notion of nationalism also fragmented indigeneity, ethnic identity and religious liberty of minorities. Indigenous identity is still disputed within the national narrative, one that is saturated with cultural, historical and political tensions. “National identity does not translate the same way for Bengalis and indigenous people”, as stated by Amena Mohsin. Bengali nationalism created two identities of nationhood in terms of language and

culture by the Awami League under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, asserting that Bangladesh is a homogenous state. The state's hegemonic attributes are demonstrated by the restriction on using the term 'Indigenous', 'Adivasi' or 'Pahari' to correctly address its indigenous people. Many people believe that recognizing adivasis as 'indigenous' of the land means accepting that the Bengalis are not the original people of this area (Tripura 212). Additionally, the distinctiveness of indigenous identity is erased by the failure to appropriately acknowledge and instead redefine them as "ethnic minorities", "khudro nrigoshti" or "upojati." In addition, these terms instil derogatory connotation, constructing Bengali supremacy over the indigenous referring to them as 'sub-people' of the nation. Indigenous people have been denied the right to be properly addressed as "adivasi", "pahari", "indigenous", or "jumma".

The language movement in 1952 which resulted in a strong emotional solidarity connected with Bengali nationalism and identity. According to Hana Shams Ahmed, "Bengali state narrative is unwilling to embrace the nuanced historical perspective because of its strong conviction for protecting Bengali language and identity". Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration stating that "All Bangladeshi citizens are Bengalis" following the 1971 independence war erased indigenous identities institutionally. Under Pakistani rule, Bengali identity was threatened by the dominant Urdu speaking group with claims that they were not true Muslims. The need to preserve and safeguard Bengali Muslim identity emerged to reclaim Bengali nationalism. The existence of different indigenous communities within the state was not only denied, but the constitution allowed for their forced assimilation into the Bengali nation which enabled CHT people to either assimilate with Muslim Bengali or face cultural elimination at the hand of the state (Chakma 21). Here, Foucault's theory on subject construction is connected with the conflicting dynamics of power and resistance that plays a role in individuals' perception and understanding in terms of indigenous identity construction. This study found that the main cause of identity crisis among indigenous students living in

urban areas is due to invisibilization of indigenous cultures, language, identities and knowledge systems stemming from Bengali nationalism. The systemic erasure of indigenous identities can be traced back to the first constitution of 1973, which stated in article 6 ‘all Bangladeshi citizens should be identified as Bengali’ and article 9 established that ‘Bengali nationalism is the core foundation of unity by adopting Bengali culture and language for the formation of identity’. The construction of Bengali nationalism, based on the idea of ‘oneness’ - one culture, one language, one religion and one community, denies the existence of other minorities, and fails to recognize and accept differences (Chakma 21). The recognition of indigenous people by the state continues to be a crucial demand in identity politics in contemporary Bangladesh (Gerharz 116). In 2022, an official notice issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in Bangladesh urged the Bangladeshi electronic media, university professors, newspapers, experts, writers, civil society members and the media to refrain from using the term ‘indigenous’ as it was not constitutionally approved (Global Voice South Asia).

Bengali nationalism disapproves that indigenous communities share a relationship with their culture, ancestral lands, and they eat, live, speak and dress differently from Bengalis. According to Hana Shams Ahmed, “there is a central idea that Bangladesh adopts multiculturalism and accommodates all indigenous cultures and languages”. She further asserts, “one safe method to make Bangladesh appear as an equitable and culturally diversified nation in the spectacle is by displaying vibrant festivals, picturesque landscape of CHT, traditional food and attire of indigenous people in national events because it benefits and strengthens the image of Bangladesh”. This limits indigenous representation to mere tokenism. “Bengali nationalism strives to empower and unify all the people of Bangladesh across a diverse range of ethnicities, but fails to function the same approach for indigenous people”, claims Uchacha-A Chak. She further added, “this phenomenon causes detrimental effects which inevitably leads to negative spills over in the form of identity crisis because indigenous

cultures are deliberately neglected or misrepresented in the mainstream". The state must recognise that indigenous identity does not weaken the state but fortifies it, it stands as a reflection of the nation's resilience, integrity and commitment to its founding ideals (Barua). With this, the next section will explore how cultural displacement results in an identity crisis among indigenous students.

6.2 From Cultural Disconnect to Fragmented Identity

The attachment of indigenous people to the land and its natural resources is, reflected in every aspect of their life economic activities, patterns of living, housing, food habits, and customs tradition and beliefs all of which are noticeably different from the Bengali way of life, which evolved on the plains (Chakma 25). Foucault's emphasis on that the influence of culture and language are limited by the societal structures, particularly individual autonomy aligns strongly with how suppression of indigenous cultures causes fragmentation of indigenous identity. Disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking the form of a permanent reactivation of the rules (Foucault 224). Furthermore, mobility allows for a more thorough conceptualization of migration across physical space and place as a dynamic process embedded in power and meaning, taking into account agency and the fluidity of shaping identities and aspirations (Visser and Gerharz 373). In this section, I will analyse how the disengagement from cultural and religious practices contributes to identity crisis formation among indigenous students as they assimilate within the Bengali culture.

Many ignorant generalisations including flat-nosed, jungle-braving, snakes-frogs-and-everything-in-between-eating, "changbang"-speaking, forestry-destroying, jum-cultivating, occult-worshipping, simple, terrifying, primitive and occasionally naked people have been used to address indigenous people instead of having concern towards the accurate representation,

recognition and respect towards their cultures and identities (Partha 209). Compromising aspects of the indigenous identity to pursue education evidently highlights the structural inequalities and epistemic violence. This internal migration not only leads to physical distance but simultaneously detaches them from traditional practices. For the subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself (Spivak 80). The unwillingness or inability to integrate with one's own cultural identities alongside the prevailing dominant narrative may culminate in a sense of alienation and displacement as stated by Spivak. Such circumstances position young indigenous students in a state where they no longer feel connected to their indigenous roots or identity. This unusual push and pull factor is specific in relation to the identity crisis experienced by indigenous students entailing a situation where they must choose between securing their future through education or remaining dedicated to their roots and cultural identity. The following observation by a respondent reflects this sentiment as she states,

“Most Bengalis seem interested about indigenous related matters only when the topic revolves around our food, festivals, tourist spots and the splendour of CHT with its mountains and waterfalls; however, they are rarely interested in learning about our cultural history and struggles. As an indigenous person, I have an identity more than that but they seem unconcerned about it”.

Through hegemonic power structures in the institutional and cultural frameworks, systematic force is used to suppress indigenous cultures and representations. Foucault's observation is applicable in understanding the broader reality through which indigenous students face identity crises. Through “political act of control” as coined by Foucault himself, this hegemony establishes an institutional control in which Bengali culture is perceived as the only form of culture that is normalised and prominently displayed in urban areas. This simultaneously erases indigenous culture, knowledge, community involvement and traditional practices through a

deeper form of systemic discrimination causing an inevitable identity crisis as the effect of a lingering cultural hangover. These arguments are justified by the following data shared by respondents. After moving to Dhaka for her higher education, another student asserted that she encountered challenges in every aspect of her life. Since all indigenous cultures are heavily centred on their ancestral lands and community, being geographically away has changed her from the original version of indigenous identity and rather produced a 'filtered' Bengali version of herself. Bengali norms and standards are all becoming a part of her being slowly but progressively through cultural assimilation.

Indigenous students have to practice both cultures simultaneously, breeding a pathway for growing closer to Bengali culture but distanced from their own indigenous identity. Another respondent shared that coming to Dhaka was a huge transition, as she felt isolated and deeply anxious about her facial features and whether people around her would appreciate her distinctiveness as an indigenous person. She admitted that, after living in Dhaka, she voluntarily chose to avoid socializing with fellow Tripura people because their opinions, process of thinking and discussion topics are different. Such lack of interaction with people within her own community also causes an identity crisis. The lack of exposure to traditional practices and community gatherings contributed to feelings of alienation and a sense of detachment towards cultural identity.

“When our voices and concerns are not heard, we feel more powerless which makes us feel an identity crisis” - another Chakma respondent affirms.

Religious hegemony also tends to inflict an identity crisis on indigenous students as an aftereffect. Out of fourteen indigenous communities in CHT, Buddhism is followed by Marmas, Chakmas, Tanchangyas, Chaks and Khyangs; Tripuras follow Hindu or Christianity; Lushais, Bawms and Pangkhuas are Christians; and lastly, Mrus and Khumis are animists. However, religious and cultural celebrations are not inclusive of indigenous communities,

directly limiting indigenous students' participation in community gatherings during such occasions. State elites and Bengali majority groups have dominated in terms of language and religion, creating an identity crisis for the indigenous people (Chakma 21). Foucault's theory explains that the body and behaviours respond to the discipline demonstrated by dominant episteme which connects with the urban-nationalist idea of modernity through the strong influence set by Bengali nationalism resulting into identity crisis among indigenous students. Therefore, indigenous students adhere to a social and academic lifestyle that is both preferred and normalised by mainstream society. In analysing discourse themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice (Foucault 49). Here, Foucault asserts that the abused function of power is used to erase indigenous cultures by asserting certain disciplines that exclude them institutionally.

Apart from Buddha Purnima, other indigenous religious and cultural celebrations such as Biju, Sangrain, Boisu, Garia Puja, Wangala and Thlaithar are not commemorated by educational institutions. The Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Cultural Affairs and educational institutions have not taken any initiatives to celebrate or grant government holidays on such occasions. One respondent claims she was forbidden from placing a Buddha statue at her hostel immediately hindering religious practices. All respondents have further agreed that, inability to celebrate important cultural festivals with family, friends and community consecutively, slowly disconnects them from their indigenous roots causing self-conflicting psychological impact. This significantly minimizes the indigenous students' community involvement when they should be spending momentous occasions with loved ones at their hometowns. According to one respondent, adapting to the Bengali way of life in Dhaka city, disconnected from her own identity, culture and community. As a Christian, she cannot observe Christian religious festivals during Easter or Christmas season with her family because her

college does not grant long holidays. So, she either needs to skip classes or personally request for a leave of absence hoping to be approved. On such festive days, when the entire community is united to partake in rituals and celebrations indigenous students have to attend classes, exams and give presentations like any normal day. Indigenous students belonging to more minority backgrounds such as Bawm, Pangkhua and Lushai communities feel a heavier weight of identity crisis caused by underrepresentation, positioning them in a state of remorse and dilemma with self-conflicting questions such as: “Why do I have to choose between celebrating my cultural festival or attending classes and exams?”; “I have become so detached from my roots, do I even fit in within my own community anymore?”. Furthermore, ethnocultural nationalism portrays the modern nation-state based on a homogenous community around a high-status ethnic elite, promoting a majority group’s dominant culture, and which offers a promise of security to minority groups, and to assimilate them into the dominant ethnocultural ‘sameness’ (Chakma 4).

Another student has shared that it has been difficult to maintain connection with her indigenous roots and identity because she has become so alienated and disoriented from her community. The majority of indigenous students growing up or studying in urban areas are unaware or seem to have forgotten about their culture and traditional way of life. This vividly reflects the wishful sort of cultural amnesia that indigenous students are being diverted towards which makes them question their own identity. The fear of loss of identity in terms of culture, place or land, language, and tradition is the main reason for the construction of a shared identity and the establishment of ethnic boundaries for the indigenous people of CHT (Chakma 25). Such experiences do not only reflect personal distress but legibly illustrate the recounts of numerous indigenous students navigating the systematic silence and disregard towards their voices which triggers identity crisis by impacting them emotionally. This emotional anguish evolves into a sense of displacement and internal conflict over time.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Bangladeshi Indigenous students encounter numerous obstacles as they navigate through urban institutions and cities. As a consequence of deeply rooted Bengali nationalism, the overall indigenous students living in urban areas experience cultural displacement that emanates from more than just their underrepresentation or lack of exposure to their culture and language but also due to epistemic violence and assimilation in Bengali predominant society. The active neglect towards indigenous related history and culture, forces them to assimilate into dominant Bengali culture to avoid social alienation. Delegitimization of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices is also caused by systematic suppression towards indigenous native languages by educational curriculums. The exclusion of indigenous languages in the academic curricula and textbooks highlights the gradual erosion towards indigenous languages as indigenous students have to learn Bangla language as a necessity, resulting in minimised effort in learning their mother tongue. This gradually impacts the academic performance, social belonging and self-esteem of indigenous students.

Moreover, the sartorial bias and exoticisation towards indigenous traditional and attires reflect the long-standing unwillingness to adopt indigenous cultures within the mainstream. The compulsory assimilation of indigenous people into the Bengali culture by adopting Bengali language, traditional clothes and way of living contrasts how the epistemic violence slowly results in an identity crisis. This ignorance towards indigenous knowledge systems further perpetuates deep rooted colonial power and knowledge structures that only recognise state-sanctioned culture and identity as innately acceptable. The epistemic violence leads to the fragmentation of their relationship with indigenous cultures and their identity. This type of cultural silencing establishes standards on the behavioural actions of indigenous youths'

lifestyle concerning how they should act, eat, dress, speak and evolve themselves in order to be socially accepted by the dominant culture.

Migration to Dhaka has increased as a result of further integration of the CHT with Bangladesh as part of the politics of centralization that were set in motion in the Pakistani era, which led to a concentration of industries as well as institutes for higher education, particularly Dhaka and Chittagong (Visser and Gerharz 375). They constantly need to deviate from their roots in order to pursue better education and careers and they are placed under constant pressure to blend in with Bengali customs and culture making them self-conscious about their identity. The feeling of being excluded has an effect because of an overwhelming sense of alienation from the majority society particularly for young students in college or university who strive to integrate themselves within social circles. Academic institutions do not observe indigenous cultural and religious occasions and such topics are not included in the textual materials as well. Such systematic approach in the exclusion of indigenous representation hinders indigenous students from learning and celebrating their own traditional practices, religious and cultural celebrations. This lack of involvement creates an overwhelming sense of identity crisis as they are disconnected from the community. As minorities, indigenous students have to negotiate with the majority Bengali society to find a place of social acceptance from the dominant culture thus accentuating the disenfranchisement of minority food culture in the form of epistemic violence. The stigmatisation towards indigenous food items restrains them from consuming their own traditional cuisines while living in urban areas.

Educational curricula should equally observe indigenous cultural celebrations and maintain proper representations and inclusion of indigenous language, cultures and history to foster inclusion for indigenous students and to promote respect and sustainability towards their cultures. Indigenous cultures should be equally acknowledged and represented just as much as

Bengali culture so that every student from the indigenous and other minority students can also feel socially included and represented.

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