

#PERSPECTIVE

Wearing a teep is my choice

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The teep was an accessory in this region's dress-up culture and I believe culture and religion are two different contexts, thus it was prevalent among women of all faiths and classes. I have seen my mother and aunt use gura teep or powdered ones or in pastes called kumkum er teep.

Once upon a time, red teep was drawn with vermilion

powder. They would use kajal made from soot to draw teep as well. Then came the velvet leaves with glue on the back, and that is the trend up until now. We have glittering teep with gemstones, designer teeps made out of pieces of cloth, and other materials like wood, glass, or even terracotta are also in vogue now.

Sirajul Islam, a member of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh and a former professor of the Department of History at Dhaka University, told the BBC, "Women in many countries of the world have been wearing the teep for millennia. It has never been particular to Bengalis or followers of the

Hindu faith. In the 19th century, the use of teep became commonplace. Women used the teep in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma, the Philippines, and Indonesia especially."

During trips overseas, my colourful forehead ornament drew the attention of foreigners first and was a pleasant conversation starter.

The teep originates from the Indian sub-continent. This is a part of Bengali culture. There is no connection between this and anti-religiosity. However, Ziaul Huq, a noted researcher, mentioned in his book, *Itihaser Oligoli*, that once upon a time, the teep was used to differentiate between class and caste in the Indian subcontinent. He stated, "The teep on the forehead has become an inseparable part of the daily life of the modern Bengali woman."

Those who want to pollute society, who want to destroy harmony, want to exploit women and build a regressive society — are the ones creating the debate around the teep in Bangladesh. Everyone should realise that national culture and religious culture are completely different. And the teep is a part of Bengali culture.

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