Dimensions of Belonging:

The Perception & Preservation of non-Bengali Muslim Ethnic Identities in Bangladesh

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our original work while completing the 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 accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract: Despite the multiple migrations that took place following partition, the experiences of non-Bengali Muslim minorities remain understudied. This study aims to fill that gap. Through ethnographic qualitative methods, migrant's decision to stay back in Bangladesh, their perception of themselves and their use of language, food and dress are specifically studied to understand migrant experiences. Findings highlight the majority-Muslim population of Bangladesh is a primary deciding factor in migration and staying back. Other reasons include better opportunities and stability in marriage. Migrant's self-perception varies with their varied experiences, such as where they spent their childhood or whether their mothers were homemakers or professionals. Still, certain aspects remain constant, such as their identification as naturalised Bangladeshis as their nationality, and the importance of food and language in identity retention, and the loss of differences in dressing for most migrants. These findings highlight the varied experiences of migrants and the need further to study their experiences in a more specific context.

Key Words: Non-Bengali, Migration, Belonging, Ethnic Identity, Perception, Preservation, Bengali-Muslim

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beautiful, courageous Dadimaa. Without you, none of this would ever exist.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

In our house, we grew up eating khao soi, letto, and a variety of Gujarati dishes, courtesy of my grandmother's Gujarati background and Burmese upbringing. My childhood was largely shaped by listening to stories from her childhood in Burma, modern-day Myanmar. As a child, I did not appreciate this unique experience. The nuances of being Gujarati and Burmese, having a Burmese upbringing, marrying a Bengali man, becoming Bangladeshi, and having Bengali children and grandchildren escaped me. Five identity changes in one lifetime, her migration and the work she put in to create a home in her host country while actively keeping her culture alive within herself and her home against all odds, none came to mind for me growing up. However, learning to critically analyse not only others' experiences but one's own to gain a curiosity for the why and the how raised specific questions, which meant that these questions had to be answered.

I knew that migrations to Bangladesh had occurred and the history and trajectory of the nationalist sentiment in Bangladesh, but what did these mean for those coming in? How did they experience their unique identity? These questions created the broad framework of this dissertation. Through it, I shall look at how identity is experienced by non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh who are part of the religious majority but are simultaneously ethnic minorities. I shall also see how Bengali cultural hegemony has affected their embodiment of their own cultures.

1.1 Background

Identity is a complex topic in today's globalised world. While the internet discusses diaspora communities in the West, and the representation and acknowledgement of diverse identities created through numerous colonial conquests are seen throughout academia (Hall, 1994; Peterkova and Kohoutova, 2023; Canagarajah and Silberstein, 2012), one point in history remains outstanding- the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, which was followed by one of the most violent mass migration events in history, when Muslims who had ancestrally lived in now India migrated to Pakistan, and Hindus who had ancestrally lived in now Pakistan migrated to India, due to borders created by the British, rallied for by certain classes from the ruling elites (Chatterji, 2007). Two regions that were hit the hardest by partition were Bengal and Punjab, both of which had significant Muslim populations significantly divided by the Radcliffe Line (Chatterji, 2007). This resulted in the halving of Bengal into East and West Bengal, with the former becoming East Pakistan due to its majority Muslim population

according to the two-nations theory developed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah- the aim? A land for Muslims (Schendel, 2009).

The only thing East and West Pakistan had in common was the religious beliefs of most of the population- Islam. Besides that, the two regions had significant cultural differences, as the majority ethnicity in East Bengal was Bengali, whereas the ethnic identities of the West Pakistani people were greatly mixed. The ruling Ashraf class in West Pakistan were also adamant that Bengali culture was too proximal to Hinduism, and thus, the people of East Pakistan could not be "Muslim enough" (Sabur, 2020; Siddiqi, 2013; Mookherjee, 2012). Alongside that, the language of instruction and administration for the entirety of Pakistan was to be Urdu, making it difficult for Bengalis to get an education and government work. This attack on both Bengali identity and the economic security of the Bengali people culminated in the Language Movement in 1952, resulting in the martyrdom of several students and protestors. When East Pakistan gained independence in 1971 and became independent Bangladesh, there was a significant focus on the national identity of the people of Bangladesh. This was seen multiple times, firstly, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman attempted to "unify" the nation post-independence by asking everyone to assimilate with the dominant Bengali identity, including non-Bengali populations (Panday and Jamil, 2009).

Another well-known example is when, during his term, President Zia-ur Rahman changed the constitution of Bangladesh to state that the country's people would be known as Bangladeshi, not Bengali (Kabeer, 1991; Riaz, 2005). Therefore, the Bengali-Muslim identity has a layered but recent history in Bangladesh. It is the topic of much conversation today. The debates of Islam and Bengaliness also show themselves clearly during large festivals, such as *Pohela Baishakh* (Bay, 2018).

Other identities are often forgotten through these events, such as the non-Bengali Muslims who migrated to Bengal at some point in Bengal's deep and rich history. As a deltaic plain connected to hilly Assam and cosmopolitan Kolkata, Bengal has been a hub for migrating communities for millennia (Alexander et al., 2015). The Deltaic nature of the land means that it is very fertile, and many rulers have come and gone, and many trading routes have been created on land and by sea. It is thus natural that the only Muslim ethnicity in recent history is not Bengali, but it can be Gujarati, Bihari, Aga-Khanese, and more. In the modern identity discourse, these identities are rarely considered in the discussions of what it means to be a citizen of Bangladesh because the focus is on the Bengali identity. Based on the fact that the dominant narrative of identity in Bangladesh is focused on being *Bengali* and *Muslim*, firstly, this study will attempt to understand why non-Bengali Muslims who are minorities in

Bangladesh may have chosen to stay back in Bangladesh rather than move away, either to the West or somewhere they may have been able to enjoy majority ethnicity status. Further, this study will also try to understand their perception of their ethnic identity now, fifty+ years into the existence of independent Bangladesh, and explore if/how they keep certain aspects of their ethnic identity alive. Ultimately, the study will attempt to understand what conditions make it possible for a multiethnic population to exist within a broadly nationalist polity.

1. 2 Research questions

Against this backdrop, the broader research objective of this paper is to understand and document the experiences of these non-Bengali Muslim minorities in Bangladesh. To do this, three specific research questions are explored:

1. *What influenced their decision to stay in Bangladesh rather than move elsewhere?*
2. *How do these people perceive their identity now?*
3. *In what ways do they preserve their non-Bengali identities if they do so?*

1.3 Methodology

To adequately introduce a reader to this dissertation, it is necessary to explain the methodology I have chosen to follow. To achieve the broad research objective of this paper, I take a qualitative, exploratory approach to migration and diaspora. Thus, the present paper takes a Bangladesh-centric approach to Partition studies, following histories and stories not generally considered during the usual historiography surrounding Partition.

1.3.1 Data Collection

This paper is a qualitative study of the nuances of migration and identity in Bangladesh. The data collection is conducted using two methodological tools.

(i) Primary Research: This research is partially autoethnographic as the descendant of a migrant myself. The data for this paper was collected through a series of eight in-person, semi-structured interviews with respondents and one semi-structured Key Person Interview (KPI) with an expert in post-partition studies and feminist studies, Dr Firdous Azim. The respondents were chosen using a mix of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. I reached out to people whom I knew had migrant backgrounds to take their interviews, and from there, they connected me to other potential respondents whom I was able to interview. The respondents had all either migrated themselves or were direct descendants of migrants who had come to Bangladesh following Partition. Most of the interviews were conducted in the migrant's

home or any other place they felt comfortable in, such as their office. The research locale was limited to Dhaka city for ease of access. The stories collected in this research will also be archived, and the nature of archives in this study is oral histories and personal narratives, which shall be preserved by detailing the lived experiences of the respondents as part of the paper.

(ii) Secondary Research: An extensive literature review was conducted to supplement and allow for a thorough analysis of the collected data, mainly reviewing books and journal articles. The collected secondary data provided the necessary context to place the collected primary data.

1.3.2 Data Analysis:

The conducted interviews were mostly in English, however, the respondents were free to respond in any language they felt comfortable in: English, Bangla, or even Urdu. Understanding all these languages with a certain amount of fluency aided my connection with my respondents, effectively creating an environment where they felt comfortable speaking about their stories. Of the eight participants, seven were women, and one was a man. Four interviewees were migrants themselves, while the other four were direct descendants and held memories of the migrations in their families.

The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to nearly 3 hours. Although consent for the interviews was freely given, the respondents were welcome to opt out of any question or the interview itself at any point. Almost all respondents allowed the recording of the interview, but one preferred notetaking instead. Regardless, the identities of the respondents will be hidden through the use of pseudonyms. One key person interview (KPI) was conducted of an expert in post-colonial studies and feminist studies, Dr Firdous Azim, herself the daughter of a migrant, leading to a nuanced and informative discussion, adding depth to the primary data. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, and the notes were put into a summary against each interview question, after which a thematic analysis was conducted. The themes followed were reasons for staying back, perception of their identities and the extent of preservation of their ethnic identities. Demographic information collected was put into a table to easily place the respondents when analysing the data.

1.3.3 Limitations of the Methodology

The nature of partition studies is such that eight short interviews can rarely holistically capture the experiences of thousands of migrants. Further, the research locale was limited to Dhaka, Bangladesh, although there is a significant migrant population in Chattagram that could not be

accessed due to time constraints. The study is also cross-sectional, incorporating multiple ethnic identities, which allows for a rich and varied dataset. However, it limits the scope to gain in-depth insights into any one ethnic community.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the respondents' narratives, which I had the privilege of collecting. Partition is an area of study underutilised in Bangladesh, and the national narrative surrounding the Liberation War glorifies the Bengali identity, overshadowing other identities that may exist in Bangladesh. On the other hand, conversations regarding minorities in Bangladesh generally tend to be about religious minorities or the indigenous ethnic minorities of the country. Between these two narratives, the narratives of the non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh, who have a relatively recent history of migrating into the region, are forgotten. As the hegemonic ideology of Bangladesh attempts to homogenise the people further, creating a heteropatriarchal dominant nation where exclusivity is heralded, the heritage of these non-Bengali Muslim minorities is being lost within the grand narrative.

Having grown up seeing one of my closest loved ones wholeheartedly attempt to preserve her identity, I believe the significance of the study lies in making space for these understudied and underrepresented identities, allowing them to claim space within history and the nation.

Chapter 2: Framework of Analysis and Previous Literature

To analyse the relayed data, a theoretical framework was created using three main theories- mobility capital, identity and belonging, and the politics of belonging. Globalisation and nationalism are included in the literature review to create the necessary context in which migration, belonging and identity would be placed to ensure that a historical and situated analysis would be achieved through this paper, for which the intersectional and political aspect of belonging is necessary. The class and gender aspects of the migrants will be studied, as these are crucial to understand how and under which conditions one can migrate and stay in a new place, as well as their role in creating belonging in the new situation.

This chapter explores the existing literature on migration and its related elements: globalisation, identity perception, belonging, and preservation. Examining these texts highlights the literature gap specific to partition and post-partition migration. The theoretical framework sets the stage for analysing the diverse identity formation across generations among the urban middle class in Bangladesh as part of this dissertation.

2.1 Literature Review

To begin, it is necessary to set the stage with an overview of globalisation in the context of this study. Here, globalisation will be discussed in the context of the circulation of capital leading to the need for migration through the work of Ali (2018) and Appadurai (2006). Ali demonstrates globalisation via the global flow of capital and labour, detailing the flow of jute as a cash crop from Bengal to far beyond and the way it affected Bengal's peasantry's lives and livelihoods, connecting them to markets in Calcutta and Britain and the ebbs and flows of demand stemming from it. Appadurai traces the contribution of the widespread globalised network of migration to the creation of minorities. This denotes the circulation of capital, and the inherent need of migrants to go where opportunities to obtain or accumulate capital are more readily available (Appadurai, 2006). When discussing minorities, it becomes crucial to understand that the numbering and categorising of the population in the modern nation-state lends to the concepts of minorities and majorities, which, moreover, leads to further anxieties regarding rights, citizenship and belonging (Appadurai, 2006). Further, according to Appadurai, minorities are also created as a result of circumstance, often the reminders of failed national projects or acts of violence. Ultimately, Appadurai states, the nation is built on the idea of ethnic purity and the existence of ethnic minorities blurs this purity (Appadurai, 2006). Thus, to see a minority group

as an outsider, as the polluter of national purity, one must be able to forget certain histories while remembering others (Appadurai, 2006).

Gellner (1983), as mentioned in Anthias (2010), states that nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy in which the ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, especially within a state, wherein the ethnic boundaries should not separate those who hold power from the rest- linking the state and culture; although linking state and culture has become increasingly difficult due to the movement of populations (Gellner, 1983 in Anthias, 2010). This definition utilises both statehood and culture, as the cultural and ethnic identity of the majority is often most reflected within state runners and actors, thus linking state and culture. However, ethnic minorities cut across these lines. This fits in well with the topic of this dissertation as we discuss the ethnic minorities within the greater Bengali nationalist polity in Bangladesh, where most state actors are Bengali. It is also particularly relevant in the modern globalised world, where complete ethnic purity has never been achieved and is becoming even more difficult to achieve now (Anthias, 2010). So, although globalisation makes nationalism a small cog in a big machine, it still underpins most processes in places like Bangladesh due to its hegemonic hold over the popular consciousness, wherein intellectuals and those in power paint grand pictures of a historical past of the culture, and fueling calls to form separate states for the culturally excluded (Anthias, 2010). Furthermore, labels of a particular group may affect one's sense of self and belonging in the nation-state (Anthias, 2010).

One of the most prominent manifestations of Bengali nationalism was the Shahbag movement in 2013, which led Sabur (2020) to explore identity politics within a nation with a long lense, from the margin. In her work, the author speaks to Bihari and Marwari respondents, both of whom have a history of being residents of the territory of now-Bangladesh from colonial times, but who experienced violence and internal displacement at the hands of both the Pakistani militia and Bengali people during 1971. Sabur critiques the exclusionary and intolerant version of Bengali nationalism that has emerged out of the canonical narrative of 1971 and proposes a version of history that looks beyond the binaries of *rajakar-muktijoddha*[1] and makes space for the multiple "others" living in Bangladesh (Sabur, 2020). Similarly, Siddiqi (2013) outlines the plight of the Bihari people who had a long history of migrating to Bengal for economic reasons. The two-nations theory and a land for Muslims gave them hope for prosperity in East Pakistan. However, Siddiqi states that most people did not vote for Pakistan, and what it meant to be Pakistani was not a clear-cut idea. This ambiguity, coupled with the state's obvious favouritism towards Urdu speakers in East Pakistan, led to othering of the

[1] Collaborator-Freedom fighter

Urdu-speaking migrants within the land meant to be their own (Siddiqi, 2013). This othering had violent consequences during the Liberation War, when the Bihari community were seen as traitors and collaborators with the Pakistan army, and were subject to nationalist hostility (Siddiqi, 2013). Once the new nation of Bangladesh was formed, a new struggle emerged as Bangladesh had to distinguish itself both from Bengalis in India and Muslims in Pakistan (Siddiqi, 2013). These discussions generally deal with the idea of the Bengali-Muslim and the conflation of Bengali with Hindu, leaving little space for nuanced non-Bengali Muslim identities. Saikia (2004) dealt with the violence inflicted upon women in Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War. Although the national narrative states that Bengali women were brutalised and raped by Pakistani soldiers, Saikia found that similar violence was inflicted upon Bihari women by Bengali muktijoddhas. This was state sanctioned, as the state recruited men from refugee camps in India, under the ideology of nation building and giving them the power to act under the state. Therefore, while there are studies focusing on the Bihari populations in Bangladesh, there is a notable absence of other Muslim ethnic minorities in these discussions.

Sinha (2014), focusing on colonialism and its effects, brings to the reader's attention the impact of colonialism on the formation of the nation-state on the women of the previously colonised nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where the struggle for women's emancipation has occurred in tandem with anticolonial nationalist struggles (Sinha, 2004). In line with the idea of a nation, is that of a national identity, which is constructed and continuously articulated and re-articulated (Sinha, 2004). The national identity is not necessarily based on inclusion, but rather exclusion, the re-articulation is done through the continuous process of defining itself against a host of "others" (Sinha, 2004). The gendered edge of this discourse of course, comes about in the characterisation of men and women within the nation. Women are symbolically considered the gatekeepers of culture, tasked with holding the honour of the group and reproducing the culture in coming generations. However, the nationalist project's utilisation of women differentiate them by various factors- age, class, religion, ethnicity, and urban/rural residence- all affecting the extent to which they are included (Sinha, 2004).

Nuanced identity is further explored by Butalia (2014), who compiled numerous essays detailing the lasting impact of Partition on the various communities of the Indian subcontinent. As the different communities experienced mutual culpability and suffering, Butalia argues that for healing, there must be a shift from mutual enmity to mutual forgiveness; and the contentious matter of citizenship needs work as a deep partnership rather than opposition (Butalia, 2014). Even when dealing with memory, it is viewed as a political project, as class interests and state

power can influence what is remembered and forgotten, as seen in the case of the memory of 1947 in Bangladesh. Butalia further argues that state formation creates refugees, however, refugees are not a homogenous group, and factors such as class can determine modes of migration, resettlement and access to rights (Butalia, 2014). Despite Partition seeing the movement of 20 million people across borders, scholars of migration studies have largely chosen to look into the movement of people from the South to the West, while the huge movement of people within the South has been overlooked. This gap is bridged by Alexander et al. (2015), who look into the migrations of Bengali Muslims during this time of upheaval. Focusing on this group allowed the authors to concentrate on patterns of migration and homemaking, and the factors which allowed them to create homes within completely new spaces- close, yet far from their original homes. Alexander et al. also argue that nation-making is a refugee-creating process, however, they turn inwards towards refugees within the South, from the South. Comparably, Yuval-Davis (1997) critiques the idea that citizenship is the full membership to a community, based on civil, political and social rights, rather than simple affiliation to the nation. Although this framework allows for a multi-tiered approach to the concept of citizenship, it also begs the question, what does this mean for people who are not full members of the community? Here, the public domain is considered political, and the private is primarily the family domain. Thus, it is argued that excluding women from the public is a deliberate design of citizenship, as men are considered both individuals and representatives of the family in public (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Further, it argues that familial and kinship relations are still the foci of loyalty, leading to one's political and civil rights being limited by these affiliations.

Belford and Lahiri-Roy (2019) consider the emotional complexities of migration and the role of women in maintaining ties post-migration between the home and host countries. They state that migration reshapes 'home' into a socio-spatial construct tied to memory, identity and belonging. Migrants have to straddle "here" and "there", navigating dual identities and fostering connections with the family left behind (Belford & Lahiri-Roy, 2019). Maintaining this connection often falls on women, and they must blend relational and material aspects of home. On the topic of home, Ahmed (2003) challenges the assumption that home equates to stability and movement to freedom, instead exploring the complex processes behind movement and homemaking and the necessary institutional structures, affective labour and political power influencing these processes. She considers homing a fluid process, constantly created, shifted and redefined according to changing migration, displacement or demands of identity (Ahmed, 2003). It considers transnationalism and how home can exist in multiple locales for migrants, often reconstructed in diasporic communities, resisting over-simplified nationalist narratives.

Lastly, it is essential to look into the use of language, food and dress in the nuances of home-making- where it is preserved and changed. To do this, we first look into Parasecoli's (2014) work, where he views food as not only inherited but how it shapes and is shaped by migrant's experiences, as it acts as a marker to maintain ties while negotiating changes in the environment, heavily shaped by ingredient availability, cultural pressures and power dynamics in the host community. Food acts not only as a personal but also as a communal experience for migrants, allowing them to connect with their own and their host communities. Ingredients, dishes, and cooking techniques take on various meanings in different contexts, and despite the homogenising effect of globalisation, they help migrants maintain their roots (Parasecoli, 2014). Similarly, Abbots (2016) examines how the relationship between migration and food shapes migrant subjectivities by fostering relationships between home and host communities. It allows migrants to create a sense of belonging while delineating boundaries between themselves and host cultures. Food also serves memory and nostalgia, as the sensory experience of eating familiar foods can take migrants back to their place of origin (Abbots, 2016).

Karpava (2021) looks into the use of language in maintaining one's heritage in both first and second-generation migrants. Her study shows both groups face unique struggles in keeping up with their heritage languages, although first-generation migrants face less scrutiny from the host community than second-generation migrants. Second-generation migrant's sense of belonging to their heritage language and culture is closely tied to their proficiency in the language, as well as support from family to learn it (Karpava, 2021). Lastly, Lewis (2014) and Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2004) both consider the complex relationship migrants and refugees have with dress. Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo state that dress acts as a non-verbal language, indicating a migrant's degree of assimilation into the host community as an act of acculturating themselves to the new context. Lewis furthers this argument and brings more nuance by showing that migrant's dress choices may adapt to context even after migration, as specific events or times may call for their traditional attire, or they may choose to adopt the dress of the host community to blend in better. Together, these show how dress allows migrants to negotiate their belonging with their identity in a new context.

2.1.2 Research Gap

As seen from the above review, there is considerable work done on the effects of nationalist sentiments within Bangladesh, on Bengalis and the effect of migration and nation-making on women. Although authors such as Sabur, Saikia and Siddiqi have looked into the experiences of Bihari people in Bangladesh, there are other non-Bengali Muslim ethnic groups in the country

whose experiences are missing from the literature, whose experiences as migrants in Bangladesh will be explored in this dissertation. Further, the effect of the nationalist sentiment in Bangladesh on the younger generations of these migrants will also be explored, who may not have seen the Liberation War first-hand but who grew up in the nationalist polity of Bangladesh. Lastly, although work has been done on the effects of food, language and dress on migrants, the Bangladeshi context of this is missing, which is another gap this dissertation aims to fill by exploring non-Bengali Muslim migrant's relationships with these material cultures and everyday practices within the Bengali cultural hegemony of Bangladesh.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This dissertation deals with three main theories- mobility capital, identity and belonging, and the politics of belonging. All these concepts will be examined through the lens of being a minority within the modern nation-state, in this case, being an ethnic minority but not a religious minority. Migration and capital accumulation, which are part and parcel of the diaspora experience, are some of the primary considerations of this analysis framework. The creation of minorities suggests migration and the forging of new and varied identities and feelings of belonging (Anthias, 2018), and how these identities are forged and belonging is created will be a central concept in this dissertation, which will be discussed using Anthias's formulation of these two central concepts in diaspora studies, as well as Yuval-Davis's analysis into the politics of belonging.

Beyond the overarching socio-political conditions migrants may find themselves in, other factors affect the decision to migrate or not. This is the central topic of this thesis, and to understand this, the concept of "mobility capital" will be used. Derived from Bourdieu, Alexander et al. (2015) describe mobility capital as the assets, competencies and dispositions that a migrant or migrant population has, the makeup of which influences the course of their movement. Mobility capital generally comprises high levels of literacy or portable skills such as artisanship, transferable assets, and dense social networks (Alexander et al., 2015). Beyond these, migrants were also known to migrate based on the expectation of finding employment within which there would be a chance for upward mobility for themselves and their children. However, this aspect may have a class facet (Alexander et al., 2015).

Once the move is made and one has migrated, there comes a new issue- identity and a sense of belonging in their new space. In this case, identity and belonging are not used interchangeably, but rather, identity is seen as a possessive and categorising concept- one possesses an identity, thus categorising them. Similarly, while belonging does categorise, it also

denotes social relating (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2013 in Anthias, 2018). Identity as a concept is expected to carry a complex, multifaceted understanding of oneself, the relationship of one's identity to one's claim on resources, the performance of one's identity, sharing similarities on multiple fronts- shared values, religion, gender or class- as well as a site for struggle (Anthias, 2018). In this thesis, identity is once again asked to carry this burden; however, it is supplemented by belonging and the context of becoming, something which identity is critiqued for not doing. To circumvent the limitations of identity, this dissertation will contextualise becoming through the major migrant-creating events of the Partition in 1947 and the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 and the migration events surrounding these more significant events. Besides that, social-relating, belonging, will be analysed alongside the notion of identity.

Here, we understand belonging as an analytical term that allows us to ask questions of *what* one may belong to and understand the discursive attributes one has which may align them with a particular group (Anthias, 2018). Belonging as a concept on its own is not enough for the analysis of this paper; thus, the political and intersectional aspects of belonging shall be utilised. Politics of belonging refers to boundaries that physically and symbolically separate the population into “us” and “them”, the struggles that are involved in determining belonging and the contestations that occur in participating as a citizen and the status and entitlements of membership that comes with this citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Further, Yuval-Davis includes the use of intersectionality theory, in which the different situatedness of social agents establishes how various social, economic and political projects impact them. Using this formulation of including identity and belonging in the context of becoming, this thesis will gain a multifaceted understanding of the participants' perceptions of themselves while placing this in the broader historical context.

Chapter 3: Historical and Demographic Details

To fully understand the dimensions of migration and belonging in Bangladesh, it is necessary to understand the history of migration and migrant patterns in colonial and post-colonial Bengal and recognise the demographic details of the participants in this study. This chapter aims to introduce the reader to these aspects.

3.1 Historical Horizons

The history taught in Bangladesh follows a specific storyline with a particular nationalistic flavour- the idea that the Bengali identity is central to the victory against West Pakistan. In some ways, this is not untrue, as the narrative around justifying the genocide of 3 million Bengalis was crafted around who or what the Bengali people were like- weak, effeminate, not Muslim enough (Mookherjee, 2012; Siddiqi, 2013). This has meant that the Bengali identity has become central for the people of Bangladesh and its politics, with different conversations about what is or is not the original Bengali culture, an obsession with the purity of the culture- a challenging endeavour in a deltaic land where many different people have come and gone, many known for their mobility (Alexander et al., 2015). This has resulted in the popular conscience imagining all residents of Bangladesh as Bengalis, mainly either Muslim or Hindu, and diminished visibilities of multiple other ethnic groups who exist within the country's borders- many of whom are Muslims.

Gaining a holistic understanding of migration to Bangladesh entails knowing the history of migration in the region. Migration is not always involuntary, tied to events such as Partition or war. Migration often has an economic incentive, as witnessed in Alexander et al. 's (2015) work detailing the history of migration into the Bengal Delta, partly owing to its arable land where the British sowed cash crops such as jute and tea. Beyond these, other economic opportunities defined migration, such as coal industries and the railways, all of which employed non-locals, colloquially *pardesis*[2], as they would not leave during the harvesting and sowing seasons as locals did (Alexander et al., 2015). The transport and communication systems of the British empire had closely connected UP, Bihar and Burma to Central, Eastern and North Bengal, creating a "vast, interconnected, zonal labour market" (Alexander et al., 2015). Although migration for women and children was limited due to the conditions of the transport systems, the closer and more accessible the destination, the higher the likelihood of women and children being present- with marriage being a form of migration universally experienced by women and

[2] Foreigners

the presence of the nuclear family being seen as an intention to permanently migrate to a region (Alexander et al., 2015).

This meant that, by the time Partition occurred in 1947, there were pre-established social networks already existing between East Bengal and different parts of India, and the mass exodus of Hindus towards India and Muslims towards East Bengal often followed these pre-established networks of connectivity (Alexander et al., 2015). Many migrants chose East Bengal at the time of Partition as it held a Muslim majority, and many felt a fierce loyalty towards Pakistan and a belief that they would be returning to their rightful land as Muslims (Sabur, 2020; Siddiqi, 2013). Therefore, since before Partition and in the years following, East Bengal steadily grew a non-Bengali Muslim population- many coming with the hope of economic prosperity and better livelihood opportunities (Siddiqi, 2013; Alexander et al., 2015). However, language became a point of contention, as the West Pakistan government often favoured Urdu speakers, giving the Bengali speakers the idea that all Urdu speakers were highly privileged while simultaneously undermining Bangla despite the vast majority of Pakistan's population speaking the language (Siddiqi, 2013).

Islam in Bengal was generally syncretic, with many lower-caste Hindus converting to Islam upon the teachings of the Sufi saints. These relatively recent conversions gave the West Pakistani elites the idea that Bengali Muslims were unreliable coreligionists and emerged a divide between the urban, elite Muslims and rural Muslims, where the former stressed their proximity to foreigners to better establish themselves as Muslims in the purest sense (Kabeer, 1991). There was another group of urban, secular Bengalis whose focus was instead on their Bengali identity rather than Muslim, and there was a sharp divide between the elites themselves. This divide created identity issues among the East Pakistani elites, as Bengali took on a secular connotation. In contrast, Pakistani took on a religious outlook and a continued belief in the two-nation theory. This was further exacerbated by the racial undertones of how the Pakistani elites, who were mainly Punjabi, treated the smaller, darker Bengalis (Murshid, 2022). This was not a new phenomenon, however, as the idea that Bengalis were small, dark, weaker and lazier- *bheto*[3]- has existed since the Mughals due to the climate of the land leading inhabitants to lead a comparatively more comfortable life than the hardier men of north India whose landscape required them to be tough (Mookherjee, 2012).

This treatment of Bengalis by Pakistanis worsened with the onset of the Liberation War, especially Bengali Hindus. Bengalis, besides their widespread killing, were also subjected to routine checks, which involved checking of genitals to determine their religious affiliations

[3] Rice-eating, here used to connote fearful

(Mookherjee, 2012). There are innumerable accounts of rape, and one of the most cited reasons for the rape of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers is to populate the land with "pure" Muslims, as well as dilute and weaken Bengali nationalism (Mookherjee, 2012). By invoking the plight of the war heroines, the women of Bengal, it became possible to involve more men in the guerilla forces to save these women and build the nation (Mookherjee, 2012). Hence, it becomes obvious why a deep sense of Bengali nationalism emerged out of the 9-month-long war. This sense of nationalism was a force behind the creation of the nation, and the view of Pakistanis and Urdu speakers as the enemy also led Bengali men to kill and rape as a consequence of nation-building (Saikia, 2004). One Bihari woman went so far as to say that 1971 was "the year of anarchy and end of humanity in Bangladesh" (Saikia, 2004, pg 278).

Knowing the sequence of events and the trajectory in which they occurred gives us the necessary context to understand the centring of the Bengali Muslim identity in Bangladesh, and how it relates to the identities of other Muslim ethnic groups that migrated here following Partition. The violence faced by non-Bengalis during the Liberation War at the hands of Bengalis and the nationalist rationale behind it is necessary for ideological backgrounds to recognise the state of nationalist discourse today and how it affects non-Bengalis lived experiences in the country even now.

3.2 Demographic Divisions

The history of migration in Bengal has meant that migration is not limited to any one ethnicity of people. As discussed in the previous section, people migrated from different regions all over the subcontinent from various routes, with different affiliations depending on the individual family history. This chapter goes into detail on the demography of the people whom this study looks into and places them categorically within the chosen demography of non-Bengali Muslim migrants. It details their age, identity, migration, education, occupation and marital status, and tentative assets. It also shows the generational shifts that occurred in these categories. The implications of such properties within these individuals will be discussed in the upcoming chapters following the research questions.

Fig: Map showing regions of origin of the respondents

The first table outlines the basic demographic properties of the respondents, including their age, education level, occupation, marital status and the number of children. The respondents ranged from 34 to 82 years of age, with the majority being around their 60s. As migrants and descendants of migrants were taken as respondents, the age range was kept purposefully open to include as many people as possible. Many of the original migrants had passed away or were ill with old age ailments, leaving their stories with their descendants whom the study spoke to.

Name	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Number of Children	Ethnicity
Habiba	73	Senior Cambridge (Grade 12)	English tutoring, Newsreader on the radio	Married	4	Gujarati-Burmese
Basma	60	Honours Degree	Director of Creative Communication under ACI	Married	None	Gujarati
Abdul Shaheb	82	Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)	Business	Married	4	Gujarati
Farzana	Late 40s to 50s	Masters Degree, PhD (ongoing)	Declined to answer	Married	1	Bengali
Shama	59	Masters Degree	Quality Head of Sterile Facility at Beximco	Married	1	From Uttar Pradesh
Sabira	34	Masters Degree	Teacher, Handles family business	Married	1	Bengali
Farhat	62	Masters Degree	Part-Time Teacher	Married	2	Indian
Parizad	Mid 60s	Double Master's Degree; PhD, unfinished	Educator in Bangladesh and USA; Cultural Specialist at the American Center; Literary Translator	Married	1	Indian

Table 1: Basic demographic information of the respondents

The educational qualifications of the migrants ranged vastly, from having studied till Grade 12 to an ongoing PhD. However, among the descendants of the migrants, all held a Master's degree at least. Interestingly, all the respondents had some kind of occupation at some point, most being formal job titles except one. All the respondents were married as well, and almost all of them had children. The two oldest migrants had the most significant number of children- 4 each, while the rest had 1 or 2. One migrant had no children of her own. However, their family had many young cousins, nephews and nieces whom she considered her descendants, so the study also considered them as such.

Out of 8 respondents, 4 are migrants, and the remaining 4 are second or third-generation migrants in Bangladesh. Three of the migrants are Gujarati, one being both Gujarati and Burmese and two of them migrated from Burma. Only one of these migrants came from Gujarat. The last direct migrant is Bengali, despite having Indian ancestry. She lived in Karachi and only migrated to Bangladesh upon marriage. The languages spoken among the direct migrants included Burmese, English, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, and Bangla, most commonly English, Hindi, Urdu, and of course, Bangla after their migration.

From the descendants of the migrants, most of them hail from different parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, mainly Patna, in India. One of them also hails from Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. These peoples' parents or grandparents were the initial migrants, and most came in the years following the Partition in 1947. The language practices of this group are also very similar to the first, as they have picked up the same language traditions- mainly Hindi and Urdu- from their parents and grandparents, primarily considering Urdu their mother tongue for this reason. The shift here comes from the only second-generation migrant, who considers herself a Bengali and her mother tongue Bangla. However, she regularly spoke Hindu and Urdu with her extended family at home. The respondents were asked what they considered their ethnic identity to be, and it has been recorded as such in the following table.

Name	Ethnic Identity	Place of Origin	Migration Status	Mother Tongue
Habiba	Burmese-Gujarati	Surat, Gujarat, India; Rangoon, Burma	Migrant	Burmese
Basma	Gujarati	Rander, Gujarat, India	Migrant	Gujarati
Abdul Shaheb	Gujarati	Surat, Gujarat, India	Migrant	Gujarati
Farzana	Bengali	Karachi, Pakistan	Migrant	Urdu
Shama	Indian	Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, India	1st generation descendent	Urdu
Sabira	Bengali	Jalpaiguri, West Bengal; Patna, Bihar, India	2nd generation descendent	Bangla
Farhat	Indian	Patna, Bihar, India	1st generation descendent	Urdu
Parizad	Indian	Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India	1st generation descendent	Urdu

Table 2: Identity of the Respondents

Further, it has been seen that migration affects opportunities for education, occupation and marriage, affecting the migrants' descendants' class positions. There have been shifts in the opportunities afforded to the migrant's descendants versus the migrants themselves, especially for female descendants, as seen in the following table. Almost all respondents stated that migration opened up doors for them and their children, which they would not have been able to have in their places of origin for ethnic, political or social reasons. While most male migrants tended to be in Business, and indeed some of their sons went into business, most female migrants were seen as homemakers, even if educated. In contrast, their daughters were allowed to study in sectors not generally considered feminine, such as engineering and pharmacology, and work professionally from as far back as the 1980s.

Name of Respondent	Ethnic Identity	Mother tongue	Education	Occupation	Assets (Tentative)
Habiba	Gujarati and Burmese	Burmese	Upto High School	Home English tutor and Newsreader	1 home in Gulshan
Habiba's Descendents	Bengali	Bangla	All have Master's degrees	All have held professional roles in different sectors	Homes in their name from their father in different areas of Dhaka
Basma	Gujarati	Gujarati	Master's Degree	Head of a Marketing Agency	Familial property in Rander, Gujarat
Basma's Descendants	Gujarati/Bengali	Gujarati/Bangla	Honour's or Master's Degrees	Different professional roles	Unknown
Abdul Shaheb	Gujarati Bora Muslim	Gujarati	High School Degree in Gujarat	Business	Home in Dhaka, Multiple Businesses
Abdul Shaheb's Descendants	Chittagonian	Gujarati	Bachelor's Degree	Business, Homemaking	Not completely known, inherited businesses
Farzana's Father	Bengali (living in Karachi)	Bangla	Masters Degree	Business	Unknown
Farzana's Mother	Bengali (living in Karachi)	Bangla	Undergraduate Degree	Homemaker	Unknown
Farzana	Pakistani Bengali	Urdu	Masters Degree, PhD ongoing	Educator	Home in Dhaka
Farzana's Descendent	Bangladeshi Bengali	Bangla	Undergraduate Degree	Engineer	N/A
Shama's Mother	Indian	Urdu	Double Master's from Aligarh University	Teacher and Literary	Home in Dhaka
Shama	Mixed/Bengali	Urdu	Master's Degree	Head of Sterile Department at Beximco	Home in Dhaka
Sabira's Grandfather	Indian	Hindi	Unknown	Business	Tea Estate in Sylhet, Home in Dhaka, Multiple Businesses
Sabira's Grandmother	Bihari	Urdu	Homeschooled	Housewife	Home in Dhaka
Sabira's Father	Indian	Hindi	Master's Degree from Portugal	Business	Home in Dhaka, Family Business
Sabira	Bengali	Bangla	Master's Degree	Manages Family Business	Home in Dhaka, Family Business
Farhat's Father	Bihari	Urdu	Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from America and the UK	Business, Managing Director of New Company	Home in Dhaka
Farhat's Mother	Bihari	Urdu	Upto Matriculate Exam, incomplete due to marriage and migration	Homemaking	Home in Dhaka

Farhat	Bangladeshi (Did not specify ethnicity)	Urdu	Masters Degree	Teacher	Home in Dhaka
Parizad's Father	Indian	Urdu	Bachelor's Degree	Civil service in India, Business in Bangladesh	1 home in Chattagram
Parizad's Mother	Indian	Urdu	Homeschooled	Homemaker	1 home in Chattagram
Parizad	Mixed	Urdu	Until PhD (Unfinished)	Educator, Author	2 homes in Dhaka

Table 3: Generational shifts in migrant families

There are also changes seen in the ethnic identities of migrants versus their descendants. While migrants held onto their identity as being from their place of origin, their descendants took up the identity of the place where they grew up or as a mixed form of identity, holding onto their upbringing and roots. Marriage saw an interesting shift, many migrants were married within their families to their cousins as was customary in their communities. However, their children did not follow this. Older descendants generally married people with whom they had worked or had professional similarities, whether by own or family choice, while younger descendants married people they liked. The youngest generation of descendants has just gained their bachelor's degree and has yet to marry. Finally, it was impossible to ascertain the accumulation of assets over the generations accurately; however, certain educated guesses could be made through interpretation, which showed that there was a definite accumulation within the descendant's generation, aided both by their parents and their marriages. All of the above will be elaborated on in the upcoming chapters.

Thus, the data presented above shall be used to reach the necessary conclusions per the research questions above. This chapter outlines the respondents' identities, their educational, occupational, and marital status, and the generational shift between them and either their predecessors or their descendants to introduce the reader to the study participants. The following three chapters will delve into analysing this information and what it means in terms of the perception and preservation of identity.

Chapter 4: Deciding to Stay

The concept of home differs significantly between migrants and non-migrants. There are various reasons why any migrant makes their host country their home. Often, these reasons are deeply personal and sometimes highly political. My dissertation covers multiple angles of the migrant experience, beginning with their decision to stay back in Bangladesh despite challenges they may have faced or other opportunities they may have had. The respondents came to East Pakistan following Partition, starting from the end of the 1940s into the 1990s. The majority of them came here with the idea that East Pakistan would be a Muslim-majority country, where they could easily become naturalised as the rightful inhabitants of the land (Sabur, 2020). However, this is often an idealised vision of migration and mobility, as there are usually practical deciding factors behind migrating, for example, the possibility of better employment and transferable skills and assets (Alexander et al., 2015). All of this is true for the respondents of this study, as will be seen in this chapter.

4.1 Conditions Before Migration

A bungalow in Rangoon with tall, airy French windows and imported lace curtains, or the biggest house on the street and the fitting surname *Gullywala*, or sprawling tea estates across different districts, are the opulent backgrounds of this study's respondents. There are certain preconditions to migration- the state of previous life and their assets and connections to their destination affect the decision to migrate. The majority of respondents in this study started from an upper-class background, many of whom had businesses and generational wealth accumulated in their land of origin. Some had businesses that spanned generations, trading in luxurious diamonds, such as Hanifa, or essential motor parts, such as Abdul Shaheb or Basma's father. These transferable skills allowed them to set up new businesses in Bangladesh.

Other educational qualifications enabled them to gain employment and migrate to their new homes, such as Shama's mother- a double Masters holder from Aligarh University, or Farhat's father, who travelled Westward for his education. Acquaintances or family members who had previously migrated also made up their social network in East Pakistan, aiding their migration. This allowed them to secure housing or accommodations soon after migrating. It was observed that the respondents who did not have one factor, usually had another; for example, Shama's mother did not have a social network in Dhaka, but she had secured employment before coming, whereas Parizad's father had no material connection to Bangladesh but came with a group of similarly motivated friends who made up his social network in the new country.

These factors line up perfectly with Alexander et al.'s (2018) definition of mobility capital, which explains that certain factors lead to mobility or immobility, and it is clear that the respondents in this study were able to use their mobility capital not only to migrate but also naturalise themselves into the fabric of the new land.

The respondents' reasons for migrating varied. Respondents who migrated from Burma were mainly of the business community, and after the military coup that led to the rule of General Ne Win, businesses began to be nationalised, leading to their migration. For those from India, the reasons were similarly related to economic, as opportunities for upward mobility in government work were dwindling, and there were much greater opportunities for employment in East Pakistan, where the government favoured Urdu speakers and where the new country had much more scope for business. Those who were highly educated, such as Shama's mother and Farhat's father, were especially sought in East Pakistan to lead schools and businesses in the new nation.

4.2 Factors post-migration

4.2.1 Stability in Income and Social Standing post-migration

After migrating, it became essential to try and make a home in the new country by stabilising income and solidifying social standings. Some respondents came to Bangladesh with pre-established businesses, such as Abdul Shaheb, who stated, "*We had a business here already, I just came and joined.*" or Sabira, whose grandfather came to Bangladesh to take over the tea garden they had in East Pakistan, leaving two brothers behind. Others used their transferable skills, mainly in business acumen, to build trade networks from the ground up, such as Hanifa's father. However, not everyone had such great luck in business. Basma's father faced multiple setbacks, most of them ethnically motivated. In her words,

> *"When my father first started his hotel business after we moved here, it was going well. However, after the war, someone came and kidnapped my uncles, who were very young at the time. They wanted the deeds to the hotel, and my father was forced to hand them over to save his brothers. This left him traumatised, and after that, when he got involved in an airline business, he did it under his Bengali friend's name. That man later took all the cash and ran off. So my father had a difficult time building up business here."*

Similarly, Farhat's father also had difficulties setting up his petrol station business here, which, Farhat said, brought them down from the upper class to the upper middle class.

However, income is not the only source of stability; it also comes from solidifying social networks. Parizad's father had a strong network in Chattagram, where they lived. During the Liberation War, many of their non-Bengali acquaintances and neighbours fled the country, but he refused to despite the threats to their security. Their Bengali neighbours turned to him for help communicating with the Pakistan military. Also, they came to their aid by bringing them groceries and essentials so they would not have to leave their house and enter potential danger.

Another prime strategy for solidifying social networks was marriage. Hanifa married her Bengali husband at 15 before she could complete her education. She was the oldest of four sisters who were already feeling insecure in their new home, and she assumes this was a motivating factor behind her early marriage, as such a marriage was unheard of in a community that rarely married outside of themselves and never so young- all her sisters married after eighteen. Similarly, Farzana, Farhat and all their sisters were also married to Bengali men, especially Farzana, whose parents specifically looked for Bengali proposals for her.

4.2.2 Women's role in creating a home

The homes visited during primary research were all cluttered in the charming way old homes are, stacked with books and memories, shelves storing fine china and family stories. Generally, women are considered the carriers of culture and responsible for the task of creating a home and enculturation in their children (Sinha, 2014), which was seen throughout the experiences of the respondents. Hanifa'as mother was responsible for passing on her values to her children, which Hanifa continues to live by, stating,

> "*My husband says, even after more than fifty years living with him, I keep saying "Ma, ma, ma, ma" because even after all these years, I still live by everything she taught me, and I pass on everything to my children."*

In the same way, most of the respondents' mothers were homemakers in their new homes, responsible for the upbringing and enculturation of the children. When Basma's mother specifically wanted to further her education, her husband told her, "*Who will stay home with the kids?*". These women also lost their social and familial connections in their migrations after their marriage, as evidenced by Parizad and Farhat's mothers, and Abdul Shaheb's wife who stated she spent her first few days in Bangladesh crying. According to Belford and Lahiri-Roy (2019), home is a socio-spatial system wherein the physical home and social household meld to create the home. These women often lost their social households to develop homes in their new lands.

They were tasked with keeping up with their connections while simultaneously building cultural connections in their children.

4.2.3 Opportunity Differences

When asked if the respondents felt that migrating opened up more doors than not, an overwhelming majority claimed that migrating opened up more doors for their families. It was noted that, although migrant mothers had limited opportunities when they arrived in Bangladesh, their female descendants were afforded much better access to education and professional growth, as was noted as a motivating factor behind migration by Alexander et al. Respondents from business backgrounds stated that there were greater opportunities to build their businesses from the ground up in the new nation where few things were readily available. They refer to the state of Muslims in India and the changing tides of migration, which would have made upward mobility much more challenging than in East Pakistan. These responses fall well within the analysis of Alexander et al. (2015), who state that migration is often chosen as a way forward for their families and children. However, Hanifa felt she had lost out on opportunities, as she found Bangladeshi society much more conservative than Burmese. Hanifa considers herself Burmese, and had she been able to stay back, she feels she would have had much more freedom to study further and, in her words, "*do something with my life, rather than just sit here.*"

Therefore, factors such as better opportunities, being part of the majority religious community, and stability in marriage have led to the respondents' decision to stay in Bangladesh rather than move west or to their country of origin. Some felt they would be second-class citizens elsewhere, whereas here, they have naturalised into Bangladeshis, with multiple generations living in the country now. However, having a hybrid identity in a country with a strong ethnic identity in its polity is a difficult task, and the perception of themselves will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Perception and Belonging

Perception, of others and oneself, shapes our understandings of our identity and sense of belonging. This will be the central theme of the present chapter. Migrants often have to balance continuity and change, intricately merging their heritage with the norms and demands of their host society to create belonging in a completely new environment. This sense of belonging is something they must negotiate for the entirety of their lives, especially as first-generation migrants feel they must hold onto their heritage (Karpava, 2021), while their descendants may also feel the pressure to hold onto their roots while navigating life in the place where they were born, differing from their older family. This chapter will examine the respondent's experiences with the host community, their perceptions of themselves, and their generational shifts and sentiments.

5.1 Host community's behaviour: Nationalist sentiments and incidents

Before discussing the respondent's self-perceptions, one must consider the backdrop of these sentiments by mapping people's behaviours towards the migrants. Although a majority of the respondents stated that the norm in people's behaviour was positive, they still reported some hostility towards them or their migrant parents. This hostility, in their view, came about due to a dislike of foreigners and was at times irrational; as Yuval-Davis states, "nationalism, although modern and correlative of the age of enlightenment, is not based on rationality" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, pg 10). For example, although Hanifa felt that personal friends never discriminated, she heard taunts from her in-laws who said she had been kicked out of Burma, which was incredibly hurtful for her to hear. Similarly, Basma personally found that her non-Bengali identity was a professional asset. Still, her father and uncles faced multiple incidents of violence and business setbacks, especially during the Liberation War when Basma's uncles were kidnapped for ransom- the deed of their hotel. The Liberation War was a time of great apprehension for most migrants. In Parizad's own words,

> *"And (laughs) my father used to say, ... He said, "I have petrol in the house, I will just pour it over you and light a match if somebody comes." And I used to think, I do not want to die that way, not really, but, it was hard to understand his point of view at that time."*

Others faced intrusive questioning and harsh allegations, as in the case of Shama's mother, who married a famous director in Bangladesh. After his death, she faced questions about her heritage on television. Some even accused her of seducing a "good Bengali man", showing how wider society irrationally viewed migrants as a threat to resources and their culture and heritage, imagining that marriage to a non-Bengali may dilute one's relationship to the Bengali culture, as a non-Bengali mother would not be able to inculcate Bengali culture into her children. Hanifa also faced this type of questioning and stopped mentioning her non-Bengali identity altogether. Farzana, who was ethnically Bengali but spent her early life in Karachi, faced direct questioning and taunts about her lack of fluency in Bangla, with little consideration of her lived experience and a disproportionate focus on her ethnic origins. Questioning, in general, was the norm, even faced by Sabira, who stated that her Bangla teachers did not like her due to her accent, a product of being multilingual, making her question her Bengali identity.

Thus, these irrational ideas and thoughts, that one may be kicked out of their home or may seduce a "good" man, are born out of the passion of nationalism—no matter how little rationality may be at the base of that sentiment (Yuval-Davis, 2011). While irrational, these have a real and lasting effect on the people who face these sentiments, as the incidents detailed above are no less than a few decades old and are still fresh in the minds of these migrants and their descendants.

5.2 Self-Perception

At the time of the interviews, these migrants had been living in Bangladesh for decades, and most had up to three generations living here after them. As such, they have gained a specific self-perception influenced by their belonging to or not belonging to this nation. This section explores the self-perception of migrants based on three factors: their ethnicity, gender, and class.

Respondents who migrated themselves understandably consider themselves ethnically from their place of origin. They also have a strong connection to where they spent their childhood; for example, Hanifa considers herself Burmese, even though she also has Gujarati roots, because she grew up in Burma. Similarly, even though Basma's mother spent a considerable amount of time in both Rangoon and Dhaka, she still considers Rander her home, explicitly saying, "*Dhaka seh behtar Rangoon, aur Rangoon seh behtar Rander*"[4]. Her children also consider themselves Gujarati rather than Burmese or Bangladeshi, even though they grew up primarily in Burma and Dhaka, a testament to their mother's acculturation of them. This is

[4] Rangoon is better than Dhaka, and Rander is better than Rangoon.

explained by Sinha (2014), who states that women are tasked with reproducing the culture of the group, which Basma's mother was able to inculcate Gujarati culture in her children. At this stage, however, everyone considers themselves Bangladeshi and feels a sense of loyalty towards the land. Abdul Shaheb, speaking about his loyalty towards Bangladesh, said that, as Bohra Muslims, he has a spiritual leader who instructs them to foster loyalty towards the land on which they live, which is what he follows. Conversely, although ethnically Bengali, Farzana considered herself Pakistani by nationality when she first moved to Bangladesh in the 1990s. However, she has taken on the national identity of Bangladesh, and her ethnic identity has stayed consistent throughout.

In the case of gender, all the respondents considered themselves the gender assigned to them at birth. However, the differences came about in their performance of gender roles and the differences between themselves, usually the second-generation migrants, and their parents. The majority of respondents follow female gender roles to a degree. Still, at least three respondents felt that they were not as "traditional" as their mothers, i.e. they did not take on the same degree of caretaking or the same amount of cooking as their migrant mothers did, owing to the role of women in recreating 'home' (Belford & Lahiri-Roy, 2019) and reproducing culture via food, as elaborated on later. Hanifa, a migrant, is proud of caring for her family and children. However, she stated that being a woman in Burma is easier than in Bangladesh due to a less conservative society and greater personal freedoms. The only male respondent, Abdul Shaheb, took on the classic roles of an upper-class male, earning and providing, joining clubs for socialising and sending his two sons to a boarding school in Darjeeling.

Regarding class, most respondents came from an upper-class background in their countries of origin. As discussed in the previous chapter, this allowed them a more significant amount of mobility and allowed them to settle more easily here (Alexander et al., 2015). However, with time spent in Bangladesh, most of them dropped to an upper-middle class status, although not everyone. This loss in status can be attributed to losses in business and land, as in the case of Basma and Farhat, or by marriage to a middle-class family, such as Hanifa. Those with pre-existing businesses in Bangladesh at the time of migration, such as Sabira and Abdul Shaheb, retained their class standing. Farzana also maintained the same class standing, as her parents chose a husband who was similar to them in class for her. Those who lost status experienced this through their living quarters, which had to be downsized to accommodate their new class positioning or loss in amenities such as a private car or the number of household staff. However, some of these slowly returned to them with time after building their wealth. In

Basma's case, she was encouraged to gain an education and work rather than stay in business due to the loss of business that her father and uncles suffered.

5.3 Generational Shifts and Sentiments

Following the previous discussion, it can be said that the descendants of these migrants have put down their roots in Bangladesh. These roots come with a certain level of belonging or feelings of insecurity around their belonging that they may face compared to their parents or grandparents. This section explores these differences.

Almost all those who migrated felt pride in their ethnic heritage; they felt connected to their heritage and identified with it. Most could proudly announce their identity, except Hanifa, whose husband instructed her not to do so as people asked too many questions. She stated,

> *"I would have loved to say I'm Burmese, but there are a lot of difficulties in saying that, so I never said it. Because I had lived in Chittagong for so long, I just said I'm Chittagonian…When did you come? Who are you? Are you a foreigner? They started saying all these things, my husband never liked it. He said don't say all those things; just say you're Chittagonian."*

As a result, Hanifa is happy that her children fully identify as Bangladeshi, as she feels this saves them a lot of trouble. Other descendants also stated they consider themselves Bangladeshi, though not all consider themselves fully Bengali. Parizad feels that her mixed identity has been an advantage, making her more broad-minded. However, descendants also need help pinpointing where they are from. Belonging is categorised as an innate feeling of being at 'home' (Anthias, 2018), and for them, the home was not the same as their predecessors; for many, it was just where they grew up in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This difference can be understood via Belford and Lahiri-Roy's categorisation of home as more than a physical space, but how it entwines with memory and emotions (Belford & Lahiri-Roy, 2019). For migrants, they have memories and emotions tied to their nation of origin, which differs from their descendants.

Chapter 6: Language, Food and Dress as Tools of Preservation

Identity is both the source and outcome of culture, as Bucholtz and Hall (2004) would argue. Factors such as language, food and dress can all act as productions and producers of culture. For ethnic minorities who have to negotiate their identity constantly, keeping aspects of their culture alive is fundamental to keeping their identity alive while facing pressures to assimilate into the dominant culture of the land. This chapter delves into how and to what extent migrants in Bangladesh utilise their heritage language, ancestral foods and traditional dress to stay connected to their homeland and how much of that is passed down generationally in their families.

6.1 Language

Identity production and preservation in the face of expected assimilation is essential for migrants, as an individual's identity is associated with belonging, integrating and engaging with one's present space, and migrating to a new place requires migrants to assimilate into a new culture while keeping their cultural identity (Karpava, 2021). For many migrants, a focal way of keeping up with their heritage is through language, especially for first-generation migrants, however second and third-generation migrants face the same need, as it determines their sense of belonging to their heritage culture (Karpava, 2021).

The above is proven through this study's findings, as most first-generation respondents faced a strong urge to keep up with their heritage language, even if no one was left to speak it with. In Hanifa's case, she felt the most connected to Burmese, as it was the language she grew up speaking. However, living apart from her parents and siblings, most of whom have forgotten Burmese, and following the death of her older brother, she is only able to keep up with the language through books or social media. Others also experienced the same urge to keep up with their heritage language, most of them teaching their descendants, either on purpose or just by naturally using it as the mode of communication at home, such as Abdul Shaheb and his family. Second-generation respondents were all taught their heritage language growing up and continue to keep up with it through media and literature. Older second-generation Urdu-speaking migrants were able to keep up with the language through their education as well, as it was part of the school curriculum before the Liberation War, and many of their spouses can also speak Urdu even as Bengalis. The choice in schools was between learning Bengali or Urdu, and while many chose Urdu, others chose Bangla to assimilate better as they would be living in Bangladesh, such as Shama. This sometimes took on a gendered dimension, according to Dr

Azim, who experienced it first-hand when her father sent her to learn Urdu and her brother Bangla- as he would be practically needing the language more. This was an important development for second-generation migrants, as school language programs are essential to accessing heritage language and identity (Karpava, 2021).

Although most second-generation respondents are proficient in their heritage language, some descendants are not. For example, Hanifa's children cannot speak Burmese, other than her son who can speak a few phrases. She never taught her children Gujarati or Burmese, as she was asked to assimilate as much as possible and because there was little need for these languages. However, all her children and her grandchildren can speak Hindi and broken Urdu, as it aids in communication with extended family and due to exposure to media. Similarly, Farhat, Shama and Farzana's children are not proficient in Urdu, their mothers' mother tongue and first language respectively. They felt no practical need to keep up with Urdu, showing a marked distance between them and their extended family as well, as even third-generation respondents chose to learn their heritage language to be able to communicate with family. Farzana's child, who is Bengali and grew up in Bangladesh, feels a strong sense of belonging to her national and cultural heritage and feels her mother's first language is not necessary for her.

Urdu was once widely spoken in Bangladesh, as per the data and according to Dr Azim, however now she does not see a way for Urdu to be once again seen as a language native to the country despite the presence of Urdu speakers. This has led to a sense of loss for people like Parizad due to the lack of access to Urdu literature. Yet, in her words, *"Urdu, it hardly has a place here, but it has a place for me"*.

6.2 Food

Food is paramount in migrant's identification with themselves and their host communities, acting as both inclusionary and exclusionary facets in migrants' construction of belonging (Parasecoli, 2014). The respondents of this study placed particular emphasis on the role of food in their feelings of belonging, their interactions with host community members and their memory. It allowed them to hold onto their culture and heritage and opened doors for interactions with host community members necessary for assimilation into Bangladeshi society. One of the first things respondents did when they came to Bangladesh was trying to find ways to cook their native foods, with varying levels of success. According to Abbots (2016), food habits are one of the last cultural traits to change among migrants, and this is seen throughout their responses. For people like Hanifa, who had to give up much of her heritage identity, food was one of the lifelines that kept her connected and allowed her to fully share with her family a part

of her culture that no one could object to. For others, such as Sabira's grandparents or Shama's mother, it allowed them to share their traditions with the host community, who received it with positive curiosity rather than hostility. Food became a tool for memory, belonging, differentiation and acculturation.

Women are the centre for the reproduction of culture through food (Abbots, 2016; Parasecoli, 2014). Women are also expected to put the rest of the family's tastes over their own, as Farzana had to; despite her love for native Pakistani food, she could not cook it for a long time due to her in-laws' preferences. However, she was later able to share her cooking with guests and others, integrating more of the community. This was also true for most other respondents, who all stated similar experiences. It was seen that some respondents based how traditional they were on how much they could cook, such as saying they were "less traditional" than their mothers, who were better cooks, as in the case of Parizad, Basma and Shama. This aligns with Abbots's characterisation that many South Asian women's self-identification as mothers and wives centres their ability to source and cook food, specifically their native foods (Abbots, 2016).

Food also acts as a strong catalyst for memory, especially when travelling to places of origin (Abbots, 2016). Hanifa stated that eating street food in Burma when she visited in the 1980s took her back to her childhood. Parizad said visiting Saharanpur and tasting the food cooked by her extended family reminded her of her late mother's cooking. Sabira expressed her grief as she could no longer taste her grandparent's cooking style, as neither were there to cook the food she grew up eating. As such, food also saw the least generational shift, instead becoming a multicultural aspect in these migrant households. As Abdul Shaheb's wife said,

> *"We all sit on the floor and eat on a thal[5]. Everyone has their roti[6], and we all share from the same thaal. We share it with our kids, grandkids. Chote, bade, buddhe, saab eksaath khate hain[7]."*

6.3 Dress

Dress is part of the cultural politics producing nations, and it simultaneously communicates and constitutes gender and ethnic identities (Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2004). Homogenous dressing creates an image of national identity, a shared history and narrative, an essential element of the nation-state, leading us to the image of the *saree-and-lungi*-clad Bengali- dress acting as a non-verbal communicator. Although the saree is a common item of clothing across

[5] Large plate
[6] Flatbread
[7] Young, old, elderly, all eat together.

the subcontinent, its daily wear is a rare phenomenon everywhere, especially among the upper classes. As a result, for the migrants coming into the land, dress became another point of change to be contended with, although not as significant as food or language. Most migrants were not used to this dressing style, relatively more comfortable in *gararas*[8] or *lungi-ingi*[9], but assimilating into the Bengali culture required them to adopt the *saree*.

According to the respondents, male migrants faced little change in their dressing styles, as they were accustomed to wearing shirts and trousers, Western office wear in their place of origin as well, many of them wearing these clothes as a badge of honour, symbolising their Western education- as in the case of Farhat's and Parizad's fathers. However, the scenario was entirely different for migrant women, many of whom moved to the region as newlywed brides who were used to wearing flowing *gararas* or comfortable *lungis*. Instead, in their new home, they were required to wear sarees, exercising the strategies of invisibility to avoid standing out (Lewis, 2014). In this case, the women in Abdul Shaheb's home were outliers. Although his wife stated that she wore sarees when she first migrated, she now wears the traditional attire of female Bohra Muslims, *Rida*, a two-piece burkha, including a hijab and skirt. The Rida is separated from other burkhas by its bright colours, embroidery, and lace attached at the hem (The Dawoodi Bohras, 2022). When visiting their home, she and one of her daughters-in-law wore this traditional burkha, bright sets of red, white and pink, setting them visually apart from other Muslims in Bangladesh. However, not everyone wears this, as her older daughter-in-law wears regular clothing such as salwar kameez.

Dress is the aspect that saw the most significant generational shift, as nearly all the descendants said they could choose what they wanted to wear freely- *saree, salwar-kameez*, and, later, Western clothing. This shift may be attributed to changes in social conditioning or the increase of women in the workforce- ultimately, changing demands of modern life affected the practicality of wearing a *saree* daily, leading to descendants of migrants opting out of wearing it.

To conclude, the findings of this study illustrate how far language, food and dress are intimately linked with the preservation of culture for migrants in Bangladesh. Maintaining heritage language use allowed migrants to keep up with family ties three generations on while continuing culinary traditions that linked them to their ancestors across time and space. Although the most affected, dress still acted as a non-verbal communicator to the rest of society of these people's roots. Ultimately, these factors are necessary tools for both preservation and assimilation.

[8] Loose, flowing pants worn below tunics
[9] A skirt and blouse dress native to Myanmar

Chapter 7: Conclusion

For a long time, I had difficulty feeling a sense of belonging. My familial experiences differentiated me from my peers, and at times it was confusing experiencing these differences while being a Bengali, in Bangladesh. It did not help that our mixed ancestry was an open secret to us, something we were not allowed to speak about. The opportunity to conduct this study allowed for an exploration of this dimension of my identity, and hearing from others who had experiences similar to mine was cathartic. As a result, this study became more than my undergraduate thesis and became something I am personally attached to.

One of the most surprising statements made by Dr Azim was that Urdu is a Bangladeshi language. The vast number of people who spoke Urdu in Bangladesh and produced Urdu literature, and continue to, is astounding. The culture of Bangladesh was not limited to the hegemonic ideal of "Bengali culture", but was pluralistic, mixing and matching a melting pot of different traditions. Shama's mother in her *garara* flying through the roads of Azimpur colony on her cycle, the women in Abdul Shaheb's family in their colourful *rida*, people indulging in *sher-shayeri,* these paint an entirely different picture of Dhaka from what we know today. Learning about the lives and experiences of non-Bengalis in Bangladesh allows us to access an alternative view of what culture could look like in Bangladesh, fighting the grip of Bengali nationalism on our conscience.

At the beginning of this thesis, three questions were asked. The first dealt with migrant's decision to stay in Bangladesh, the second with their perception of their identity currently and the third asked how they preserve different aspects of their identity now- if they do so at all. In the following section, I shall summarise the main findings detailed throughout the study, followed by outlining the limitations of this study and finally, l shall provide options for future directions this topic may take.

7.1 Key Findings

This thesis first dealt with the question of *why* the respondents decided to stay in Bangladesh. From their answers, it became clear that one of the main reasons for choosing to migrate to Bangladesh- then East Pakistan- was the Muslim-majority population. Those living in India or Myanmar post-partition realised that opportunities for professional growth were declining, businesses were being lost, and the ease of travel between India and East Pakistan was dwindling. This led to their migration into Bangladesh, where they could ensure growth and comfort for themselves and their descendants, which turned out to be the case. Most of those

who migrated then were reluctant to become immigrants again, instead choosing to stay in Bangladesh. Their descendants stated close family ties and the chance of being better naturalised into the social fabric as their reasons for staying on. However, third-generation migrants were more open to moving Westward than their parents.

The second question addressed the migrants' perceptions of themselves via their ethnic, gender, and class identity. Most migrants' ethnic identities stayed the same as their place of origin, but for those who themselves had a mixed identity, where they spent their childhood significantly impacted their ethnic identities. Second- and third-generation migrants struggle with identity and belonging; however, they have reached a point of understanding and embracing their mixed identities. While all respondents identified as cisgender, there was some contention among second-generation migrants who felt less traditional as women compared to their mothers, which can be indicative of the role of migrant women in recreating home and culture. Lastly, most migrants came from an upper-class background, which aided in their migration, but struggles and marriage choices in their new home led to some falling into the class structure and becoming upper-middle class. Those with flourishing businesses already existing in East Pakistan retained their upper-class status.

The third question inquired into the negotiations for preserving one's ethnic identity. It was found that food was the most critical factor in preservation and the last cultural trait to change, backed up by Abbots (2016). Following that was language, with all migrants retaining their heritage language and their descendants learning the same languages, especially those practised at home and practically needed for communication with extended family. The aspect that was least preserved was dress because it acts as non-verbal communication, and to assimilate better, all migrants donned the typical attire of the time- the saree. However, dress saw the most significant generational gap, as none of the descendants are limited to the saree now.

7.2 Challenges

Although this thesis has provided insights into the experiences of migrants from different communities in Bangladesh, certain challenges remain.

- The time available to conduct the study was limited, leading to certain constraints and decisions that had to be made to ensure the best quality of work within the finite time available.

- The study is limited to migrants currently living in Dhaka. This was a deliberate decision due to time constraints; however, it did prevent the study from including migrants who live in other parts of the country, such as Chattagram.
- A smaller sample size was chosen due to limitations in time and access to respondents. Although the sample was small, the interviews attempted to go in-depth into each theme to compensate for this limitation.
- The study covers the experiences of migrants from multiple different backgrounds. While this aids the exploratory aspect of the research, it also limits the depth of the study, as no one community's experience is explored in detail.
- The study is entirely qualitative, and the lack of quantitative data may lead to specific subjectivities due to the respondents' varied experiences and reflections upon those experiences.
- Although most of the interviews were in English, some were in Urdu and Gujarati. A lack of fluency in Gujarati and, to a lesser extent, Urdu meant that at times, translations by family members were needed, and certain meanings may have been lost in translation.

7.3 Future Direction

As discussed throughout the study, research on Partition and its effects in Bangladesh is extremely limited, meaning there is excellent scope for further research on migration and its impact within the context of the nation. Some possibilities include:

1. A deeper look into the effects of migration on any one community, such as the Gujarati community.
2. A comparative analysis of the effects of a migrant's class positioning on their ability to migrate and assimilate into the social fabric of a new nation.
3. A study of Bengalis living in Karachi or Bengalis who spend a significant amount of time living in Pakistan and the effects of this in the context of Bengali nationalism.
4. A study on the younger generations of migrant's descendants and their view of their mixed ancestry and their sense of belonging.
5. A collaborative study comparing the experiences of East Bengali Hindus moving to India and Indian Muslims moving to East Bengal post-Partition with a focus on class and its effects.

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Appendix

For people who immigrated themselves

Demographic questions:

1. Age
2. Education level
3. Profession
4. Marital status
5. Number of children

Ethnic identity:

6. Where were you born?
7. What was your Parents' education and profession (in the previous country)?
8. Is there any shift in your identity? If so, what?
9. How do you identify yourself now? (Ethnic Identity/Class/Gender)?
10. How many languages do you speak? Which ones?

Further questions:

What influenced their decision to stay back in Bangladesh, rather than move elsewhere?

1. When did your family move to Bangladesh?
2. What caused your family to choose to migrate to Bangladesh?
3. What are the major differences for your family living in two places?
4. Was it difficult to rebuild life here? If so/not, why and how? (Capitals- social, economic, cultural)
5. Where did you initially move to in Bangladesh? How did you find that place?
6. What kind of work did you/your parents do once they migrated?
7. How did you meet your spouse? Did you marry into your ethnicity or outside of it?
8. Was it difficult to adjust in a new environment? (Different ethnicity, once married)
9. Do you still have connections with your ancestral home- extended family?
10. How often do you visit each other? What is that experience like? (Connection to home and host country)

How do these people perceive their identity now?

1. When asked where you are from, as is common here, how do you reply? Why? How do you feel about this answer?
2. Does your ethnic identity come up often? Have you ever felt that your response to this question has affected people's behaviour towards you?
3. Do you and your children identify as having the same ethnicity or is it hyphenated/different? How do you feel about this?
4. You may have heard a lot of debates about Bengaliness circulating, what is your take on this seemingly national debate as someone who is non-Bengali?
5. How important would you say your ethnic identity has been in your life in Bangladesh?

In what ways do they preserve their non-Bengali identities, if they do so? And intergenerational shifts.

1. Is there anything you do to feel connected to your ethnic background? Anything that you share with your children so they learn about your background?

Language

2. Which language are you most comfortable with? Who do you speak it with?
3. Which language is your mother tongue? How do you feel when you speak your mother tongue?
4. Did/do you try to teach your mother tongue to your children/grandchildren/the next generation?

Food

5. Are you able to cook/have your native dishes in Bangladesh? Can you name a few of the dishes?
6. Have you shared these recipes with the next generation?

Clothes

7. What kind of clothing do you feel most comfortable wearing?
8. How do the clothes worn in Bangladesh differ from those worn by people from your ethnic background?
9. Have you ever brought those clothes for, or attempted to have your children try those clothes on? If yes, how do you think they felt wearing them?

To close out (Open-ended questions that may need rapport building/more thought):

10. Did migrating open up more options for you, or did it close important doors? How do you think being a woman is related to your answer?
11. How have you seen the role of women differing between your family in your ethnic community and between yourself living here, or between generations within your family?
12. How have you felt seeing the shifts in your family's newer generations, their being different from your ethnic community?
13. Was there ever a chance for you to leave Bangladesh? If yes, why did you not take it/ why did you decide to stay back? How do you feel about this decision now?

For people who's parents/grandparents immigrated

Demographic questions:

11. Age
12. Education level
13. Profession
14. Marital status
15. Number of children

Ethnic identity:

16. Where were you born?
17. What was your Parents'/grandparents' education and profession (in the previous country)?
18. Is there any shift in your identity? If so, what?
19. How do you identify yourself now? (Ethnic Identity/Class/Gender)?
20. How many languages do you speak? Which ones?

Further questions:

What influenced their decision to stay back in Bangladesh, rather than move elsewhere?

11. When did your family move to Bangladesh?
12. What caused your family to choose to migrate to Bangladesh?
13. What are the major differences for your family living in two places?
14. Was it difficult for them to rebuild life here? If so/not, why and how? (Capitals- social, economic, cultural)
15. Where did your family initially move to in Bangladesh? How did they find that place?
16. What kind of work did your parents/grandparents do once they migrated?
17. How did the migrating family member meet their spouse? Did they marry into their ethnicity or outside of it?
18. Was it difficult to adjust to a new environment for them? (Different ethnicity, once married)
19. Do you still have connections with your ancestral home- extended family?
20. How often do you visit each other? What is that experience like? (Connection to home and host country)
21.

How do these people perceive their identity now?

6. When asked where you are from, as is common here, how do you reply? Why? How do you feel about this answer?
    a. Follow up: What did the migrating family member reply?
7. Does your ethnic identity come up often? Have you ever felt that your response to this question has affected people's behaviour towards you? Does this also go for the migrating family member?
8. Do you and your parents/grandparents identify as having the same ethnicity or is it hyphenated/different? How do you feel about this?
9. How important would you say your ethnic identity has been in your life in Bangladesh?

In what ways do they preserve their non-Bengali identities, if they do so? And intergenerational shifts.

14. Is there anything you do to feel connected to your ethnic background? Was anything shared with you so you learn about your background?

Language

15. Which language are you most comfortable with? Who do you speak it with?
16. Which language is your mother tongue? How do you feel when you speak your mother tongue?

17. Were you taught your mother tongue by your family's previous generations?

Food

18. Are you able to cook/have your native dishes in Bangladesh? Can you name a few of the dishes?
19. Have these recipes been shared with you by previous generations? Have you shared these recipes with the next generation?

Clothes

20. What kind of clothing do you feel most comfortable wearing? Did the migrating family member feel comfortable in the same piece of clothing? What did they like wearing?
21. How do the clothes worn in Bangladesh differ from those worn by people from your ethnic background?
22. Have you ever worn your native clothing? If yes, how did you feel wearing them?

To close out (Open-ended questions that may need rapport building/more thought):

23. Did migrating open up more options for your family, or did it close important doors? (If migrating member is a woman: How do you think being a woman is related to your answer?)
24. How have you seen the role of women differing between your family in your ethnic community and between yourself living here, or between generations within your family?
25. How do you feel seeing how you are different from your parents/grandparents having lived in Bangladesh rather than your country?
26. Was there ever a chance for you to leave Bangladesh? If yes, why did you not take it/ why did you decide to stay back? How do you feel about this decision now?