

Conceiving Collectivity: The Urdu-speaking ‘Bihari’ Minority and the Absence of ‘Home’.

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Abstract

What makes a Diaspora Diasporic? Is it a shared sense of culture, of experience, of home?

Ongoing research in Bangladesh into the ‘Urdu-speaking Bihari’ minority explores the role of space and settlement in the formation of Diasporic identity. Research finds a community that conceive of themselves as a **unit** of collective membership, but one with very little to **unite** around. A community divided along cultural, political, linguistic, generational and socio-economic lines.

Of the estimated 1.3 million Urdu-speaking Muslims that migrated to Pakistan following the country’s creation in 1947 more than one million migrated to the region of East Bengal in present day Bangladesh.¹ Only 300,000 are thought to remain, 160,000 of whom have been living in temporary ‘camps’ set up by the ICRC since the War of Liberation in 1971. The remaining 140,000 live outside the camps, integrated, to varying degrees, within majority Bengali society.

As a linguistic community they do not speak a common language. As a cultural community they practice ‘culture’ in different ways. As a social community the divisions of class, money, opportunity and status are deeply felt. As a political community they are without a common political identity or equal access to political participation. As a Diaspora they do not share a sense of home.

Through the experience of space, settlement and segregation this paper analyses the role of culture, politics, language, generation and class in dividing and uniting Diasporic groups, and questions the significance of a sense of ‘home’ in understandings of the term.

Key Words: Diaspora, identities, migration, minorities, rights, citizenship, integration, segregation, Bangladesh.

Introduction

In the context of ‘diaspora’ discourse a collective sense of ‘homeland’ or geographical origin has long claimed definitional centrality². The ‘yearning for another place’³ so often depicted could be real or imagined, historical or mythical, but its symbolic significance is widely documented⁴. The assumption that this is shared by all members has been insufficiently

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interrogated. Floya Anthias' 1998 contribution however, represented a point of departure. She argued that the concept 'deploys a notion of ethnicity which privileges the point of origin in constructing identity and solidarity'⁵ and in the process fails to articulate differences with regards to the roles played by class and gender. She suggested that by treating each 'diasporic group' as a unity inter *and* intra-ethnic processes were ignored. Not only may migrations have occurred for different reasons but different countries of destination may have provided different social conditions, opportunities and exclusions.

My research explores some of the 'intra-diasporic' issues of difference and diversity that have been neglected. The population I have chosen is a paradigmatic case of the historical aftermath of colonialism and the displacements of population that resulted. This paper takes Anthias' arguments one step further, suggesting that countries of destination provide social conditions, opportunities or exclusions *differentially* to individuals *within* the 'diaspora group', significantly altering relationships to real or imagined 'homelands'. I have drawn on an ethnographic methodology⁶ and have been influenced conceptually by approaches from linguistic politics and the study of historical memory to analyse the long-term consequences of this experience. While class, status and social position is foregrounded, other areas of intra-group difference are examined, and the experience of place, settlement and segregation found to be a powerful dis/unifying force. I argue that a more nuanced understanding of 'diaspora groups', and their diverse, abstract and often ambiguous relationships to 'home(s)', is crucial to furthering the debate.

The Politics of Bangladesh and Pakistan and the formation of 'Diaspora'

The 'Urdu-speaking community' in Bangladesh could be considered a 'linguistic diaspora'. The descendants of over one million Urdu-speaking Muslims who migrated from India to East Bengal (then East Pakistan) following the country's creation in 1947 they are distinguished from the Bengali-speaking majority largely through language⁷. Many had fled violence in North Indian states such as Bihar (as well as Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and others), and the label 'Bihari' has been used in reference to the descendants of these migrants in the region ever since. Controversially sharing certain linguistic and cultural similarities with the ruling (West Pakistani) Punjabi elite these migrants gained increasing influence in the new state⁸. They 'came to be known as conduits of the West Pakistani 'colonialists', who were not to be trusted'⁹. Cultural, linguistic and political tensions culminated in the Liberation War of 1971. Following the country's Liberation, the entire Urdu-speaking community were branded enemy collaborators and socially ostracised. Thousands were arrested or executed,

while others, having been dispossessed by the state and fearful for their lives, were forced to flee¹⁰. A once strong sense of ‘Diasporic unity’ was now constructed in different terms. ‘The community’ had been displaced for a second time, but now ‘within’ the land that had become their ‘home’. They were once again ‘othered’ but not as a result of their own actions (emigration) as much as the events that took place around them.

Many of those who had lost land, jobs and family members found themselves in temporary camps set up by the International Committee for the Red Cross. It is estimated that around 160,000 remain today in the camp-like ‘settlements’ established immediately after the war. Disenfranchised, isolated and lacking leadership, for thirty-six years after the War they were labelled ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ and left in limbo. Since 1971 however a proportion of the population have begun to establish themselves outside the camps. Around 140,000 ‘Urdu-speakers’ are now thought to live outside, ‘integrated’, to varying degrees, within majority Bengali society. With the advantage of a non-camp address and increasing cultural and linguistic integration with the Bengali majority, some of these individuals have been accessing rights of citizenship previously denied them. As a result, social and economic divisions are growing between the camp and non-camp based communities¹¹. In May 2008 the High Court of Bangladesh finally granted the entire community citizenship, and prospects for acceptance, integration and rehabilitation appeared to be improving. However, thirty eight years since the War of Liberation they are a ‘community’ divided along cultural, political, linguistic, generational, socio-economic and *spatial* lines.

We, the ‘Urdu-speaking community’- ‘insiders’, ‘outsiders’ and those ‘in-between’.

According to dominant public discourse ‘a community’ of ‘Urdu-speakers,’ ‘Biharis’, ‘Mohajirs’¹², ‘Maowras’¹³ or ‘Stranded Pakistanis’ were disenfranchised on the grounds of their support for a national enemy (Pakistan), and as the result of an ethno/linguistic identity that had become problematic. When asked what defines ‘the community’ in relation to the Bengali majority however Urdu-speakers themselves disagree. Some invoke a shared experience of migration, a shared history (‘We migrated from India; that is what makes us different’, Emran, 37), others a linguistic heritage (‘I think it’s about our language...There is only one fact, language’ Yusuf, 90). For some it is inherited culture, ‘ethno-racial’ characteristics, or a combination of all these things (‘The main things are language, culture and height’, Afsar, 26).

In part these differences of opinion reflect growing distance within the community. Not only are some Urdu-speakers still living in the slum-like ‘camp’ settlements (‘insiders’) while another group has more recently moved outside (those ‘in-between’), but a third group of Urdu-speakers also exists.

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These people are neither camp-dwelling nor previously camp-dwelling and they can be found occupying an entirely distinct social position ('outsiders'). This group were able to retain their houses after the war and have therefore remained 'integrated' among Bengalis ever since. They carry the same 'ethno-linguistic' identity but the discrimination suffered by those that ended up in the camps has almost completely passed them by.

Our family never lived in the camps, our grandfather owned this house. (How were you able to keep it during the War?) We had two houses before the War, one house was lost but my grandfather was a contractor in the Pakistani army and he had lots of Bengali friends so we were able to save this house (Noor, 'outsider', 19 yrs).

...we had some Bengali friends who were in a good position in the Government so they saved us...When the Pakistani army came I helped some Bengalis, that's why they helped me during the War. Only four people in this street retained their houses, it used to be 100% Urdu-speaking... (Ali Reza, 'outsider', 44).

Space, politics and citizenship

In 1972 the camp community were surveyed by the ICRC, asked to choose between settlement in Bangladesh or so-called 'repatriation' to ('West') Pakistan, a country most had never seen. Homeless, destitute and fearful for their lives in an unsympathetic country the majority opted for 'repatriation'. Some left under the agreements of 1973 and 1974 but the process gradually petered out¹⁴. While their cultural and linguistic association with Pakistan was always problematic, it was actually this expressed desire *to be taken* to Pakistan (*to be Pakistani*) that ultimately disenfranchised the camp population. A small but powerful political group formed within the camp with the primary purpose of achieving continued 'repatriation'. The camps are therefore understood by wider society as a collective political voice that is 'pro-Pakistani', despite internal political divisions. Consequently, the majority of those Urdu-speakers who have always lived outside the camps consider the camp population themselves as *in some way* to blame for their current position. 'Us' and 'them' are powerfully invoked:

Camp-dwellers are very innocent. **They** have no connection to Pakistan, **they** came from India. **Our** fault is still some believe we are Pakistani. **We** have explained many times that **we** are

from India, the country who liberated this land, so I can claim a partnership after this Independence. The fault was that **they** were speaking Urdu and Pakistanis speak Urdu, so this created a false link (Ali Reza, 'outsider', 44).

It's the Government's opinion that people who live in the camp aren't citizens but those outside are. **Those** that lived in the camps built the barrier themselves, calling themselves Stranded Pakistanis (Shamama, 'in-between', 38).

Those who retained their houses on the other hand, retained their civil status, as they merged virtually unseen into the local Bengali majority.

I never asked for my rights from anyone. The Government gave them to me automatically. I have always had a passport and have travelled to Bangkok, Malaysia, India, Pakistan and Singapore...I have always been living outside that is why I got the facilities of a citizen (Parvez, 'outsider', 50+).

Many of the Urdu-speakers who have their own properties they have always been registered (as voters)...When you are in the camp you have no opportunity citizens have...(you) can't get into school, or get a commissioners certificate for a job. But outside the camp you always get these facilities. Many in the camp use a fake address to get them (Shamama, 'in-between', 38).

Which came first, disenfranchisement, social ostracism or Pakistani sympathy? This is difficult to determine, but unsurprisingly fundamental inequality of civil status has dramatically altered the composition of 'the community'.

The cultural status of language

Not only do those living outside the camps speak better Bengali than those inside (again in some sense both cause and effect), but many also have a very different relationship to the one thing that is meant to connect the whole community – Urdu. While those that have always lived outside the camps speak, to varying degrees of 'purity', a fairly standardized Urdu, 'The language of the camp is a language of its own' (Osama, 'outsider' 53). In the camps they speak a mixture of Bodgpuri (an Urdu-based regional dialect of Bihar), Bengali, and even some Hindi. It is a language that is referred to by those in the camps as 'Urdu', but is not considered by many that live outside to be so. The younger generation of elite Urdu-speakers who have always

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lived outside refer particularly condescendingly to this strange 'bastardised' form:

They don't speak Urdu in the camps anyway. Or not proper Urdu. They speak some kind of South Indian dialect I think"... "No, something from Bihar... a kind of 'Bodgepuri thing? (Pappu and Shayester, 'outsiders', 19 and 24).

The cultural status of language is clearly powerful. Some from the camps themselves speak equally disparagingly of their own language:

No, no we are not practicing Urdu. It's a kind of hodgepodge of languages! (Tuni, 'in-between', 27).

In the camps we are speaking the Urdu which is valueless. It is Urdu 'dust', 'rubbish' ('dhula')... they (those outside) can't understand us... and they say my Urdu is valueless (Salma, 'insider', 18).

Language itself forms a barrier between and within an *apparently* 'linguistic community'.

Despite its troubled past, among literary circles *outside the camps*, Urdu in its 'pure' form, associated with North India and Pakistan, is still revered. Urdu poetry recitals (Mushairas) are common and linguistic heritage is valued. This cannot be said of younger 'Urdu-speakers' however, the majority of whom no longer read or write the language; many continuing to conceal their linguistic heritage.

Lots of literary people's children don't read Urdu. They (the parents) have some fear (that they will not be treated equally) and so they started sending them to learn Bengali (Osama, 'outsider', 53).

Another language has been embraced by this generation. While Pakistan and the Urdu language have complicated associations in Bangladesh, India's national language, 'Hindi', is free of many of the battle scars:

(What language do you speak?) ...Aaaaah Hindi – my parents are from Bihar, India. My father knows Bangla but he feels more comfortable with us in Hindi. (Is this not Urdu?) Most

Hindi channels on TV are in Urdu. All Bollywood songs are 90% Urdu, but they call it Hindi (Noor, 'outsider', 19).

I feel embarrassed to speak Urdu because the Pakistanis were the losers and they speak Urdu too...If I say that I am Indian, I can speak Hindi well, it's something of a relief (Shabana, 'outsider', 26) (her father adds) Bengali people hate Urdu but love Hindi. And yet they can't tell the difference! (Md Ali, 'outsider', 50+).

For young people in Bangladesh India is aspirational; a world power representative of global fashion, media and modernity in all its forms.

Culture and Religion

When they first arrived in East Bengal, 'Urdu-speaking' migrants were respected as 'Mohajirs', religious refugees who had migrated in the search of an Islamic 'homeland.' On the surface religion was the very thing 'Urdu-speakers' shared with their Bengali hosts¹⁵. However having brought them together in East Bengal religion has also become a dividing force. Both communities are Muslim, both predominantly Sunni, but certain religious festivals, are practiced differently in line with the cultural heritage of each. Religion is both a marker of sameness and difference.

Where culture begins and religion ends is also a source of considerable contestation. 'Urdu-speakers' in the region have always been regarded as a particularly religious community and the camps sites of religious conservatism and 'anti-Shia' sentiment. Yet a lack of education in the camps causes many of those more 'Bengalised' Urdu-speakers who have moved outside to accuse them of practicing religion in the 'wrong' way; blurring the boundaries between 'religion' and 'culture'. The festival of Moharram is an interesting site in which to examine these complex dynamics.

We are celebrating Moharram in a different way to the camp dwellers, we are praying to the Almighty. In the camp they beat drums, sing songs, make a Tajia. In our religion we are directed to pray to the all mighty but the camp dwellers are less educated and they cannot understand the religious customs. So they have stopped celebrating as Allah says (Md. Ali, 'outsider', 50+).

Biharis who are living outside they do not want to show that they are Urdu-speakers. That is why they celebrate the cultural program less...Biharis who are living inside they are

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celebrating Moharram in the wrong manner. They are beating drums and that is very wrong (Chanda, 'in-between', 25).

As those that leave the camps leave behind many of their 'Bihari' or 'Urdu' cultural practices they begin to celebrate Moharram privately simply as a month of prayer, as Bengalis observe the festival. Here 'Islamism' in some sense therefore resembles 'Bengaliation'; inter-ethnic bonds grow as intra-ethnic solidarity weakens.

Social conservatism vs. 'progressivity'

Traditional understanding of the camps as sites of *religious* conservatism is clearly muddled. However, a related *social* conservatism defined by an entrenchment in the past, and an 'over-identification' with an indefinable lost home is commonly articulated. Where this home is located is not necessarily clear but an un-willingness to let go of it is thought by many Urdu-speakers who live outside the camps to have created a world of restrictive social control. One of the areas in which this is most clearly expressed is in relation to the position of women:

Living outside is kind of pleasure. Those who live outside enjoy their freedom, beside family, nobody give you guidance. Whereas the camps are a strict social community...In the past, we (girls) faced problems moving outside the camp...outside the camp women will always enjoy more freedom. (Why do you think this is so?) This is because the older generation in the camps are from Bihar and they have an old concept of cultural practices and want this to be continued (Shabnab, 'insider', 20).

In Geneva camp my sisters were not allowed to move freely. They could not make friends there. In camp area if a girl and boy talk camp dwellers mind, they are not accepting relations between girls and boys which is a kind of barrier. This is not true outside the camps, (where there is) easy access to socializing, making friends. Those who are living outside the camp they are educated and they have a different social status. People who are living in the camp are following Bihar's conservative cultural practices. They do not want to move out from their own cultural barrier. The level of education has not increased among the camp-dwellers. Those who move out are the more progressive people. I can understand what's right and

wrong and think that friendship between boys and girls is natural (Emran, 'in-between', 37).

Class and social stratification

Spatial segregation also represents social stratification. Those 'in-between', who have in recent years made enough money to move out of the camps into rented accommodation outside have felt this social shift first hand:

Camp-dwellers are treating us differently (since we moved outside), **they** think Shamama is rich now. Bengalis (also) think that 'if Shamama managed his rented house he has wealth', so it will increase your value. 'He has dignity now because he lives outside. His landlord knows he must have some money that is why he is ok with it'...It's a big problem to get a flat in Dhaka...If **we** say **we** are from the camp they do not allow **us** to rent their flats...It's about **their** society, **they** are not able to mix with Bengali educated society. **They** cannot maintain their status with the locals...some think 'if **they** have lived in the camps they won't know about hygiene etc, **they** might not look after the house'... (Shamama, 'in-between', 38).

Many of those that have always lived outside feel as detached from the camp community as they do from poor Bengali society.

I do not have friends in the camp, because we are wealthy and have 'better society' ('acchi mahol'). I know some of them who are very poor...some of them cannot even speak Bangla... (Shabana, 'outsider', 26).

In my family we have some cross marriages with Bengalis. It's good to merge with the locals. Better than Bihari people who are uneducated and illiterate (Parvez, 'outsider,' 50+).

(Have you ever been to the camps?) Of course not, why would I? (laughs) I don't have any time for those people. They're called Maowra you know. (pause) I'm sorry... I'm not a humanitarian. I look after myself, that's how we do things here. (Have you ever called any of them Maowra?) I'm ashamed to admit it, but yeh, I have. One time I had some of them fixing my car and I knew it was the brake, but they kept saying no it was the exhaust, and I knew, I know a lot about these things,

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and I was getting annoyed so I shouted the same thing in Urdu. And then they listened, and decided it was the brake! They gave me a cheap deal and the job was done. So I said to them right, so you *#?*# Maowra you'll listen to another Maowra but no-one else. (So you'd call yourself a Maowra too?) No, I'm not a Maowra, I mean no-one would call me that. (Why?) Because I have too much power (Jalal, 'outsider', 29).

Place, labels, ethnicity and identity

The label 'stranded Pakistani' helped to cement the camps externality in the country's national psyche (and throughout the country's legal system) for thirty-six years, turning spatial divisions into national ones¹⁶. Individuals too express their own identities in these spatial terms. Inside the camp they are an 'ethno-linguistic' minority, outside they are Bangladeshi. As Emran ('in-between, 37) explained, 'Before I moved outside the camp I had many names, Bihari, Stranded Pakistani, Maowra. Now to other people I'm just Bangladeshi'.

The significance of these spatial divisions is highlighted by those individuals who we might describe as ethnically Bengali¹⁷ but who understand themselves as 'Bihari' due to the context of their social community. Salima's story highlights the identificational resonance of place/settlement, and the way in which it intersects with language and local community:

When I came here before my marriage I was totally Bengali. I couldn't speak a word of Urdu and since coming here I have completely switched! (She laughs) Now it's difficult to understand Bangla rather than Urdu. Now I'm more fluent in Urdu! (Laughs again). When I first came to the camp I was teased for not speaking Urdu. They said things in Urdu but I didn't understand. The one word I understood was 'Bangali'. They were calling me 'Bangali, Bangali... At that time I didn't feel like an Urdu-speaker I felt like a Bengali but as I came here and was teased so much, I struggled so much to learn Urdu. And after 2/3 years hard work I got Urdu and the teasing stopped. And now I feel like a Bihari (Salima, 'insider', 40).

Ethnic, cultural and linguistic boundaries are clearly highly opaque, and informed by the realities of a local environment. As one individual explained, 'When a person leaves the camp he leaves his culture there...'
(Emran, 'in-between', 37).

The absence of home?

In many cases, with more to unite around '*inter-ethnically*' than '*co-ethnically*' a once important 'diasporic home' now occupies an elusory position. The label 'Bihari' is probably that most commonly used among all social strata¹⁸, the very word descriptive of a majority diasporic homeland. The geographic location or 'home' it originally denoted however has all but disappeared:

They think of themselves as 'Bihari' but only 4/5% of the camp population would actually describe themselves as 'Indian' (Syed, 'in-between', 30)¹⁹.

I would call myself Bihari. 'Hay Bihari Pakistan, hay Bihari Pakistan' (a traditional lament relating to Pakistan's refusal to accept them)...I wouldn't call myself Indian because people are always saying we are Pakistani, why should I alone call myself Indian? If I say I am Indian will India take me? No (Farhana, 'insider', 70).

Historical associations in part explain this. Much of the older generation in the camps feel complicated about India due to memories of the devastating communal violence they experienced there²⁰. Immediately after the War of 1971, and in part as a result of fear and exclusion, they chose to identify with a 'home' (Pakistan) that further excluded them, disenfranchised them even. Ever since, they have been lost in the limbo of India/Pakistan/Bangladesh and whatever their citizenship status now, many will remain in some sense '*homeless*' for the rest of their lives:

Now I am nowhere, have no identity, (I am) not Bihari, not Bangladeshi, (I am) nothing (Roshanara, 'insider', 65).

We don't have any nationality: we're not Indian, not Bangladeshi, not Pakistani, so we don't have an identity... (Rashed, 'insider', 42).

The majority of the younger generation in the camps have never seen India (or Pakistan for that matter) but have instead spent their lives 'trying' to be accepted in Bangladesh. The 'silencing of trauma' is well-researched and after years of communal violence, a brutal war and a double displacement many youngsters don't even know where their parents came from let alone the true tragedy of their story²¹. This generation may also describe

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themselves as 'Bihari' but their home, as well as their 'homeland' is the camps of Bangladesh²²:

I am very much Bangladeshi. I don't want to talk about language. I speak Bangla because I'm Bangladeshi. I was born here so I am a citizen of Bangladesh...it is just my right, the ID card doesn't matter, I am very much Bangladeshi regardless (Roki, 'insider', 18).

Notably however, outside the camp, *association* with India (and as we have seen, the Hindi language) has become possible again. In contrast, among this integrated section of the population pride in the original 'diasporic home' may be coming back. 'Bihar', as a state has no cultural kudos²³ and Pakistan is tainted by War, but India as a country is modern, trendy and sophisticated:

When I say my mum's from Bihar people frown upon it still....When people say to me 'if your mum is Bihari is she Pakistani?' I say 'Do you know where Bihar is?' Have you looked on a map? It's in India!' It shows that the perception of an association between Biharis and Pakistan is still very much there. Bengalis don't have a problem accepting Hindi but they do have a problem accepting Urdu (Shayester, 'outsider' 24).

Hindi is very common in Bangladesh. It is true also; we migrated from India so we are Indian rather than Pakistani. I sometimes tell my friends I am Indian and speak Hindi; I create an identity for myself (Shabana, 'outsider', 26).

Paradoxically the notion of India somehow distances these individuals from their 'Bihari-ness', and from Pakistan and the War, and instead they are associated with Bollywood movies, global fashion and modernity. In some sense class, status, and the 'luxury' of memory they bring, have given many of the more successful, 'integrated' Urdu-speakers the chance to explore their geographic and cultural roots.

Conclusion

In many ways the 'Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh' does not match up to much that is associated with the concept of 'Diaspora'. My investigation reveals a case in which ongoing attachment to the 'referent-origin'²⁴ has been blurred, and internal connections are varied and multiple.

Different collective representations of this migrant population have not only formed elsewhere but under local conditions also²⁵. Within one city they are a group constructed as much in terms of singularity as solidarity.

Postmodern approaches have made substantial contributions to widening 'diaspora' discourse. However in the attempt to define 'diaspora' "not by essence or purity but...hybridity"²⁶ the continued emphasis on a *collective* point of *origin* has situated the nation-state once again at its heart²⁷. Difference is indeed celebrated, but too often premised on absolutist notions of 'collectivity' (the 'illusion of community' to use Dubois's term) that is insufficiently addressed. Anthias notes that within the academic debate 'the lack of attention to issues of gender, class and generation...is one important shortcoming'²⁸. However other areas of intra-group division are significant too and my research finds place/settlement a powerful variable of opposition. Identities have been constituted in spatial terms and in the camps years of disenfranchisement and the silencing of trauma have cut them off from their geographical roots:

What unites the (camp) community isn't language, India, history...it's the camp. A camp identity is stronger than anything else. It is this identity that is labelled 'Bihari', that's why it's become a term of abuse" (Syed, 'in-between', 30).

We are residents of the camp, we are camp people" (Faizur, 'insider', 35).

In many ways 'diaspora' discourse has privileged ethno-racial links of origin and 'home' over *inter*-ethnic relations of space, place and locality²⁹. Physical proximity is formative of *cultural* communities too, and can generate powerful bonds of mutual engagement. To neglect these not only undermines restrictive power relations intra-diasporic groups may conceal, but also the potential for inter-ethnic alliances. What binds a large proportion of 'the community' here therefore is not an attributed origin but conditions of settlement and segregation. While in part reflective of a deeply-rooted intra-ethnic *socio-economic* hierarchy, it is at the same time enabling of trans-ethnic alliances that should not be foreclosed. The importance of more nuanced understandings of 'collective origin' to diasporic populations is critical not only in maintaining space for inter-ethnic dialogue but also in understanding how identities and inequalities are conditioned and expressed.

Notes

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¹ C.Abrar, *A Forsaken Minority: The Camp-Based Bihari Community in Bangladesh*. RMMRU, Dhaka, forthcoming; P.Ghosh, *Unwanted and uprooted : a political study of migrants, refugees, stateless and displaced of South Asia*. Samskriti, New Delhi, 2004. See also, I.Talbot, *Freedom's Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experience in North West India*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

² 'What distinguishes diaspora people is their ongoing or re-awakened attachment and loyalty...to the homeland which they feel they have left', (M.Kearney, 'The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism'. *Annual review of anthropology*, vol. 24, 1995, pp. 547). 'Diaspora' means nothing more than the idea of displacement and the maintenance of the connection with a real or imagined homeland,' (S. Dufoix, *Diasporas*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p.2). See also R. Cohen, 'Diasporas, the nation-state and globalisation' in *Global History and Migrations*, W.Gungwu (ed.), Westview Press, Oxford, 1997; S. Vertovec, 'Conceiving and researching transnationalism' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 22, 1999, pp.447; J.Shuval, 'Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm' in *International Migration*, vol. 38, 2000, pp.41.

³ Shuval, 2000 p. 44

⁴ G.Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics: A Reader*. Croom Helm, London and Sydney, 1986.

⁵ F.Anthias, 'Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity?' *Sociology*, vol. 32, 1998, pp. 558. 'Diaspora formulates a population as a transnational 'community'. The assumption is that there is a natural and unproblematic 'organic' community of people without division or difference dedicated to the same political project(s)' pp.563.

⁶ Twelve months fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2009. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Frederick Bonnart Braunthal Trust as well as RMMRU, Al Falah Bangladesh and the Shamsul Huque Foundation.

⁷ Ghosh, 2004; Talbot, 1996

⁸ A.Ilias, *The Indian Émigrés in Bangladesh: An Objective Analysis*. Shamsul Huque Foundation, Saidpur, 2003; M.G.Kabir, *The Changing Face of Nationalism: The Case of Bangladesh*. University Press Ltd, Dhaka, 1995.

⁹ Ghosh, 2004. p.40. As suspicion mounted, the words of Major Ziaur Rahman, the future president of Bangladesh, sealed the community's fate: 'Those who speak Urdu are also our enemies because they support the Pakistan army. We will crush them' (S.H.Hashmi, *The governing process in Pakistan 1958-1969*. Aziz Publishers, Lahore, 1987.)

¹⁰ E.Paulsen, 'The citizenship status of the Urdu-speakers/Biharis in Bangladesh'. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 25, 2006.

¹¹ Ilias, 2003.

¹² 'Mohajir' was the term applied to the faithful that accompanied the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in AD622. It was more commonly used in reference to 'Urdu-speakers' in the years following Partition, defining them by a label that commanded considerable respect.

¹³ A term of abuse largely nowadays only used in reference to camp-dwellers.

¹⁴ An estimated 163,000 in total by 1992 (C.Abrar, *A Forsaken Minority: The Camp-Based Bihari Community in Bangladesh*. RMMRU, Dhaka, forthcoming.)

¹⁵ 'Look, we have separate languages but we have the same blood running throughout our bodies. Every Muslim has the same blood' (Laila, 'insider', 37).

¹⁶ Similarly, the label 'Bihari', with its seemingly innocuous regional reference, brands them as outsiders to such a degree that it is considered "a swear word in Bangladesh" (Syed, 'in-between', 30).

¹⁷ Obviously the word 'ethnic' is relational, as is the criteria that will determine whether or not it will be used (G.Baumann, *Contesting Culture: Discourses on Identity in Multi-Ethnic London*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996). How descent is defined is socially constructed and in Bangladesh it is thought to be determined paternally.

¹⁸ Although there have been attempts to replace it with the label 'Urdu-speaker', considered more politically neutral. Despite its own misleading reference (to the state of Bihar as opposed to North India more generally) and pejorative usage, camp dwellers in particular identify strongly with the term.

¹⁹ This correlates with the first phase of research I conducted in 2006 in which under 10% of the camp population referred to themselves as Indian.

²⁰ Many still greatly distrust the Hindu population, and lost family and friends in the violence before they fled.

²¹ The 'ethnic myth of common origin, historical experience and...geographic place' (Vertovec, 1999, p.3) so often noted, has been erased.

²² The two are frequently confused, both in the academic literature and conversations with interviewees. A distinction between 'current residence' and 'sites of real/imagined origin of emotional/metaphysical connection' is however significant.

²³ 'Whiteness' is desirable all over the world and 'Urdu-speakers' from Delhi, UP, and West Pakistan gain a certain kudos in relation to darker skinned, shorted 'Biharis'. Bihar's tragic history of famine, poverty and violence has done little to improve its cultural status.

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²⁴ Duboix, 2008 p.xv.

²⁵ An example of differences formed elsewhere is Pakistan, where the label 'Mohajir' (with its religious connotations) has been retained in reference to Urdu-speaking Muslims who migrated from India after Partition.

²⁶ S.Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, J.Brazier & A.Mannur (eds), Blackwell Publishing, London, 1990 p.235.

²⁷ The very focus it was thought by some to move beyond (see for example P.Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso, London, 1993, p.6).

²⁸ Anthias, 1998, p.577.

²⁹ In an increasingly interconnected world the ability of transnational communities to share more than physical ones has been well recognised (see J.Shuval and E.Leshem, *Immigration to Israel: Sociological Perspectives*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1998; J. Shuval, 'Migration to Israel: The Mythology of Uniqueness', in *International Migration*, vol. 36, issue 1, 1998) but the 'limits of those transtate communities' (Duboix, 2008 p.57) is not.

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