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Trans-national identities, modes of networking and integration in a multi-cultural society: A study of migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia

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Trans-National Identities, Modes
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Trans-National Identities, Modes of Networking and Integration in a Multi-Cultural Society. A Study of Migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia¹

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Abstract

Nation is defined as an “imagined community” (Benedict Anderson 1991) of the inhabitants of a country that shares a common sense of identity. Among the migrant Bangladeshis in Malaysia, consisting of very diverse groups of people, a common national identity as Bangladeshi citizens or Malaysians is not a reality. Rather, the nurturing of class interests and exploitation as well as regionalism and affiliation with local power brokers are very common. Along with this the formation of hybrid trans-national identities through integration and interaction with the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia, is another reality. Networking is identified as a major survival strategy, but it is motivated by the then social reality. This paper will explore how people attempt to survive in Malaysia under these socially diverse conditions.

¹ This paper is prepared from a conference paper, presented by the author in the 3rd GSN International Conference, held in Malaysia in August (21st to 23rd August) 2006.

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1. Introduction

Movement of people outside the state border is common in this period of globalization. At present, there are about 175 million people, 3% of the world's population living outside their countries of origin (Somasundram, 2005). Based on the type of aspirations (concerning their travel to and settling down in different countries) and circumstances of the receiving society, migrants try to adapt with the new environment and formulate different kind of networks (within and outside the host society). This paper is an initiative to explore the types, causes and consequences of networking of the migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia, who came as a response to the industrial demand of the country. Entering as skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled migrant workers they engage in different socio-cultural and business networks (in order to survive) and develop specific types of transnational cultural identities. The question is, across the border, among these migrant Bangladeshis, what are the ways that bind them together? Or do they really work as a homogenous unit? How do they find and enter networks for their survival in an alien society? On what basis is their networking formulated? How do they integrate themselves into the socio-cultural systems of the receiving country? Which are the most relevant concepts for this migrant community - 'nationalism', 'multiculturalism', 'transnationalism', 'homogeneity', 'heterogeneity', 'hybridism'?

As a matter of fact, writings on globalization have identified the economic and political demise of national boundaries, as well as the development of transnational cultural formations (Featherstone, 1990; Robertson, 1995). On the one side, arguments are going on showing the importance of national unity through nationalism for overall socio-economic benefit, while on the other hand, the positive and negative impacts of globalization and the concomitant socio-cultural changes are the issues of long debate in conferences, seminars and papers. Discourses on hybridism, multiculturalism, formation of Creole language and identities (Mandal, 2003), processes of cultural assimilation (Gerke, 1997), identification of transnational communities (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc Szanton 1994) and diaspora (Anthias, 1998) ---- all are the areas related to globalization and migration, on which academicians are concentrating now. Under these circumstances the central question of this paper is, whether nationalism works as a stimulating force to bind Bangladeshi migrants together within and outside the state border and if 'yes', then what is its actual form? Or, is there a kind of 'hybrid identity' being developed through inter-ethnic networking? Through empirical evidences these points will be clarified in the next few sections,

- 'Bangla Bazaar', a case study among the migrant Bangladeshi businessmen of Kuala Lumpur
- 'Homogeneity vs. heterogeneity', everyday reality and networking
- 'Integration into the multi-cultural society', an introduction of hybrid identities
- Conclusion.

The secondary and primary data of this research have been collected from June 2005 until July 2006 through intensive field work and an interview survey (sample size 150 persons in Peninsular Malaysia) among returned and current migrants in Bangladesh and Peninsular Malaysia. Based on qualitative research semi-structured interviews, group discussion and case study methods were followed to gather in-depth information. Sources of secondary data are literature reviews, newspapers, magazines, web pages, published and unpublished journals, reports and conference papers of several institutions and organizations.

2. 'Bangla Bazaar', a Case Study among the Migrant Bangladeshi Businessmen of Kuala Lumpur

Death anniversary of a Bangladeshi leader

Speech 1

"You see we are living here, but we are taking care of our family and relatives at home. We work here and we send remittances for the well-being of our home town and country. (...). I am rich, but I don't forget you, my fellow brothers, because I know you are making money on your toil, like me. I do business here, but I sell Bangladeshi food items, clothes, 'biri' (cigarette), 'sayur' (vegetables), fishes that you can't get abroad. I recruit not only Malaysian workers, but my brothers are also working here, in my shop. You see, here in the stage, some of my friends are sitting, who bring Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia. Some of you came here through our channel. Please let us know whether you want to bring anybody here. I do take care as you can get Bangladeshi food (preparing food following Bangladeshi cooking style) in my restaurant. My cook is a Bangladeshi man ... has prepared a nice 'daging lembu' (beef curry) for you mixing green chilli, pepper, coriander seed and other spices. You will not find it sweet because no 'santan' (coconut milk) and 'gula' (sugar) is added here, you will eat and you will feel that you are enjoying Bangladeshi dish. Please have 'minum' (drinks) while you are sitting. I know my brothers you have come here after finishing your duties in the factory. Some of you have come here by leaving your overtimes. So a cow is slaughtered for you. Please don't go without having 'makan' (food). We will pray in the 'Bangla surau' (a Muslim prayer house named 'Bangla') for the victory of our party in the coming election of Bangladesh and we will pray for our great leader, who formed this party. Today is his death anniversary; I am so sad that he is not with us. He martyred his life for the shake of the country. (...). May be, some day some of us will become a great leader like him. After earning a lot, may be some of us will go back and will take the responsibility of the country."

Speech 2

"Bismillah Hir Rahman Ur Rahim. My brothers and sisters, as salamu alaikum. We are here because this is the day when our great leader was killed by few assailants. This is not a celebration; this is a day of mourning for the whole Bangladeshi nation. We are here to make our fortune, but we cannot forget the day. We formulated a branch of that party in Malaysia based upon his ideals. We pray for the party and also for our great leader. We are here after our whole day working, because we love them. We are here, because we want to make our family happy by earning and sending money. Some of us are making so much progress that they can move to another country. Last month, one of our Bangladeshi brothers went to Poland, my friends. He spent 30 thousand RM for it. The amount that he spent was his own income from here. I brought him here from Bangladesh as a factory worker and now he made this progress. Here some of us are students, technicians, engineers and some also workers. We are engaged in business, but we sell not only local (Malaysian) items, but also Bangladeshi goods. We don't have local partners only, but our country brothers also assist us as agents. We have gathered here because we are Bangladeshis. We will assist each other if we have any problem in Malaysia. My brothers, a nice meal is prepared for you by slaughtering a cow (...)."

The above speeches were delivered by two Bangladeshi businessmen named Kalim Miah (pseudonym) and Dabir Miah (pseudonym), in 'Bangla Bazaar' of Kuala Lumpur, while they were remembering the death anniversary of a national leader, one of the former Presidents of Bangladesh. Instead of one gathering, two meetings were arranged. Since without registering in

the 'Registration of Societies Department' any kind of association or organization (of seven or more members) is forbidden in Malaysia ('Societies Act 1966' and 'Societies Regulations 1984') these meetings took place in the name of the religious prayers ('Milad Mahfil' in Islam). The orators spoke as the leaders of two non-registered political branches that developed based on a national political party of Bangladesh. In the study area respondents were divided into members of two branches of a common political party. As the leaders of each branch wanted to be respected by holding posts of the party and found it prestigious for them, they separated into two segments of the same party. In each meeting a stage was prepared for the leaders, while the other migrants, for example the workers and the students, were sitting lower in front of the stage. On the stages were businessmen, manpower agents, lecturers of different private colleges and officials of different organizations. Among them some were staying in Malaysia as 'PR' (permanent residents) holders. Some even stayed for more than 15 years by managing business or spouse visas. They were affluent; they contributed for the expenses of the meetings and therefore got the opportunity to sit upstairs on the stages (of the two mentioned separate meetings). They were the speakers, on the other side, the general workers and students were the silent listeners. They were honorable persons to the listeners and they were addressed by others as 'boro vai' (Bengali word, in English 'elder brother'), 'Sir' or 'boss' (leader).

Based upon the above case some questions may arise. Such as, 1- what is the internal relationship among the leaders and members of a same branch? What is the interrelationship among the members and leaders of two different branches? Why do the general workers and students let themselves be divided into two segments following the interests of the leaders? Is it a kind of 'patron-client' relationship? Or a specific type of exploitation? 2- Who are these leaders and workers? How do the leaders advance their economic position? In the following parts the answers of these questions will be sought after based upon the research findings.

3. Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity', Everyday Reality and Networking

Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia are a heterogeneous body of people on the basis of income (amount, source), education, job, area of origin, length of staying, settlement type and internal and cross-cultural networking with the multi-ethnic people. The term 'gender' is not mentioned here, since most of the respondents of the study were males. In fact, migrant workers are not allowed to bring family members (written in the contract form). And in Bangladesh, there are some restrictions concerning certain kinds of female migration, especially the migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Presidential Order 1981, Tasnim Siddiqui, 2001). Consequently, instead of government's initiatives, female migration in Malaysia continued mainly depending on personal network or organized by private agencies. As migrant workers women came until 1996 (field notes 2006) and left after their expiry of job contract. Male workers continued staying either by renewing their work permit in the same company or by starting to work in another company (converting into an undocumented worker), while waiting for a chance provided by the host government to change their status into a documented worker.

Though both of the male and female workers came on short-term basis, but males could not go back as they were the principal bread-earners of their families. After earning, they had to send money to their families and parents at home in Bangladesh to help maintain their livelihood. Besides that, according to the respondents, after January 2001 male workers entered Malaysia following clandestine ways, while females could not because of the patriarchal social system of Bangladesh. A female's decision to travel to another country depends on the male elders of the family. Females were not permitted or encouraged by their male guardians to work

abroad, because the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers froze until May 2006. Considering women as the 'weaker sex' (Moore, 1995) and unworthy of taking risks (like travelling and working on tourist visa), the male dominated society of Bangladesh prohibited them from earning abroad. Besides, being afraid of losing honour in the society sometimes people become reluctant to provide data concerning their female relatives' involvement in any kind of unskilled and semi-skilled job in a foreign country. As a matter of fact, among the 150 respondents of the study area only 1.3% workers were females who used to stay as unskilled workers. There were variations among the interviewees on the basis of occupation. The majority (80%) were unskilled and semiskilled workers. The others were 'pure professionals' (2%), 'professionals and businessmen' (4.7%), 'pure businessmen' (6.7%), 'workers and businessmen' (2%) and in unemployed status (4.7%). Their educational qualification is also very diverse. Professionals came either as experts on respective fields or changed their positions after having higher degrees from Malaysian universities, but the circumstances of workers and businessmen were quite opposite. Some of them completed their higher secondary or secondary exams before entering Malaysia, where some were lacking any kind of education from their home country. The businessmen, who are now demanding honourable positions to their fellow country mates, have changed their fortune after coming on calling and tourist visa. They managed to do business either by engaging in joint businesses with the locals or by staying on spouse visa. It seems to be assumed as a local rule that foreigners can do business, but they need to have local partners. Local partners will be the owners of 51% and the rest will be the foreign investors (this situation was found in the study area). They are engaged in business by opening restaurants ('mamu restaurant' is coined by Tamil Muslims and Bangladeshis, mainly all kind of 'halal' food including cooked rice, noodle, juice, teh-tarik/ tea and curries are sold here), call booths (it is a very familiar and popular business in the study area, mainly workers come to call shops either for making long distance phone calls to home country or to buy international calling/IDD cards for hand phones), grocery shops (where different kind of goods are sold, ranging from food items to DVD,CD etc) and travel agencies along with local partners. The jobs that the professionals are engaged in are not same, such as teaching, working as officials or specialists in the IT sectors, banks, N.G.Os etc. Those, who are doing business, need to visit 'Bangla Bazaar' almost regularly. There are also variations among the unskilled and semiskilled workers based on their types of activities, educational background, documented or undocumented status, affiliation with locals, length of staying and working areas. In next section two tables will be provided where the first one will present the diversity of the respondents' status and the second one will depict the causes and types of networking.

Table 1. Heterogeneous body of respondents

Gender	Occupation	Status	Education	Way of immigration	Area of Origin
Male (98.7%)	Unskilled and semiskilled workers (80%)	Documented	Illiterate	Bangladeshi relatives, friends	Dhaka
Female (1.3%)	Pure professionals (2%) Professional and businessmen (4.7%) Pure businessmen (6.7%) Workers and businessmen (2%) Unemployed (4.7%)	Undocumented	Primary level	Tourist visa	Chittagong
		Supervisor/line leader/general worker	High school level	Calling visa	Rajshahi
		Married with local	SSC	Student visa	Khulna
		IC/PR holders	HSC		Barishal
		Married with local	Undergraduate	Student visa	Dhaka
		IC/PR holders	Graduate	Modern technology	Chittagong
		Married with local and business	Graduate		Barishal
		Joint business with natives	Graduate	Bangladeshi relatives, friends	Dhaka
		IC/PR holders	Illiterate	Tourist visa	Chittagong
		Married with local and business	SSC	Calling visa	Barishal
Joint business with natives	HSC	Student visa	Dhaka		
		Graduate	Modern technology	Chittagong	
	Married with local and business	Married with local and business	HSC	Bangladeshi relatives, friends	Dhaka
	Joint business with natives	Joint business with natives	Graduate	Tourist visa	Chittagong
			Illiterate	Calling visa	Khulna
			HSC	Tourist visa	
			Graduate	Calling visa	
	Married with local	Married with local		Bangladeshi relatives, friends	
	Living under friends/relatives shelter	Living under friends/relatives shelter		Tourist visa	
				Calling visa	
				Student visa	

Source: Prepared from survey data and interviews among the migrant Bangladeshis.

Table 1 shows that on the basis of occupation, social and legal status, earning sources, educational qualifications, way of immigration and area of origin different internal groupings or ties have been formulated among the respondents. While on the one side diversities have been noticed on the basis of occupation, social and legal status etc, homogeneity exists within each group depending upon the same occupational, legal and social status. This study has found potential contributions of these categories/factors for the development of bonds/networks among the respondents. Quoting from Granovetter (1983) two types of ties can be mentioned here, 'strong ties' and 'weak ties'. Several groups of strong ties were found among the respondents who were either homogeneous on the basis of profession and other qualifications or connected with each other by their ways of immigration, areas of origin (in Bangladesh) or their social and legal status (documented/undocumented, IC/PR holders, inter-ethnic marital or business bonds etc) in Malaysia. These strong tied groups were affiliated with 'other groups' through networking. The members of these 'other groups' were not in the same position as the strong tied group. Still for adaptation or upward mobility they contact them and develop a kind

of 'commercial networking' by monetary reciprocity. Following Granovetter this type of networking can be defined as 'weak ties'. Since this type of contact is not so often and functions depending more on mutual demand and exchange than trust, fellow-feelings and nationalist bonds, the relationship and ties are not so strong. Rather, there exists a hierarchal relationship where power differentiation, discrimination and conflict are very prominent. In fact, among our two cases, presented earlier, Kalim Miah is the habitant of Noakhali (Chittagong division) and Dabir Miah comes from Barishal. Both of them are engaged in manpower business and through monetary exchange they assisted their village mates to come here as workers. There are also other workers from Noakhali and Barishal who came to Malaysia on calling visa, but their fellow village mates (who came either by Kalim's or by Dabir's channels) supported them by providing information about better jobs, houses, the foreign language, the working atmosphere, local rules, customs and norms. Thus two groups of 'weak ties' (among different status groups) and several groups of 'strong ties' (in the same status) were formulated based on the ways of arrival and existence in Malaysia. The other workers and businessmen also joined either in Kalim's group or in Dabir's group following their political interests, types of business and work or area of settlement in Malaysia. A worker therefore may come from Gazipur (Dhaka division), but he can be a member of Kalim's or Dabir's group depending on his demand and the scope of fulfillment. Consequently, either for renewing work permits, for sending money or to encounter the threats from locals they try to develop networks with the influential Bangladeshis. Or a businessman from Dhaka can try to make friendship with the businessmen of Barishal or Noakhali, because all are foreigners and they need to cope with the environment to make their luck. Hence, different kinds of alliances are formed in order to survive abroad and for upward social mobility. The question is why wealthy/influential persons want followers? This study has identified two causes. First it is a business strategy for them. By bringing workers they get service charges. Considering them as 'powerful', 'influential' and 'well-connected' people, workers go there either for renewal of work permit and passport or to manage a better job. For each type of service they take money from the workers. They (workers) also come to their shops as customers. Second achieving more followers in the political party is a 'prestige issue' for them. After reaching a higher position of the ladder, they expect acknowledgement from others. They dreamed to become a leader since their early childhood. Though abroad, it is still somehow a scope to fulfill that desire. Therefore 'economic rationalities' as well as 'status' and 'prestige issues' influence them for grouping and lobbying. These diversified causes of network maintenance will be shown briefly in Table 2.

Table 2. Causes of Network Maintenance

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid For adaptation	19	12.7	12.7	12.7
Loneliness	29	19.3	19.3	32.0
Afraid of local people	20	13.3	13.3	45.3
Emergency situation (sickness, police raid, sending remittance, borrowing money)	24	16.0	16.0	61.3
Better job, passport & work permit renewal	18	12.0	12.0	73.3
Threatening by some country mates	12	8.0	8.0	81.3
Finding a way for permanent settlement	14	9.3	9.3	90.7
Finding a way to go to another country	14	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Prepared from survey data among the migrant Bangladeshis.

4. 'Integration into the Multi-Cultural Society', an Introduction of Hybrid Identities

"As soon as Aneu was brought to her husbands place in Kota Bangun she became a Muslim and married him according to Muslim custom. She is quite amused about the fact that after undergoing the religious ceremony, which had probably no deeper sense for her, she was accepted as a Kutai. This process of "masuk Melayu" is a standard practice of assimilating other ethnic groups. Wee (1984) has described this process of assimilating sea nomads (orang laut) to Malay society in the Riau Archipelago. There are three aspects of this process, namely accepting Islam, Malay custom and Malay language (Nagata 1974, quoted in Gerke, 1997)."

Kalim Miah of 'Bangla Bazaar' is now staying in Malaysia through getting married with a Malay lady. They have two children, one son (5) and one daughter (3). Though there is no system of affixing father's name and title with the offspring's name in Bangladesh, but in context of his children's naming two words have been added. His son's name is Foysal bin Md. Kalim Miah and the daughter's name is Ayesha bint Md. Kalim Miah. Here 'bin' means son and 'bint' means daughter. Attaching these two words it is stated that they are the son and daughter of Kalim Miah. This Malay style of naming is the outcome of Kalim Miah's inter-ethnic marriage with a Malay lady.

Among the three aspects of assimilating into other ethnic group in Malay society he got one point from the beginning, because he is a Muslim. He had to achieve the two other criteria, Malay language and custom. Through his staying and working in a factory of Kuala Lumpur he managed to learn Malay language even before his marriage. In fact, their matrimonial bond was the outcome of an affair relationship. It developed while both of them were working in the same factory. As his wife is a native Malay speaker, he needed to follow that language for conversation with her. The ceremony took place in Malaysia maintaining Malay custom. Because

of the same religious background, the marriage customs were more or less similar. According to him, "still a few dissimilarities exist. We could not get married before obtaining a certificate of marriage course. I had to provide her full part of 'dower' (property/money that the bride receives from the bridegroom in time of marriage as she will be subjugated totally under the authority of her husband.) immediately when the marriage was solemnized. Before marriage, representatives from my side, my village mates and brothers went to her parents with 'hantaran' (odd number of gift boxes for fixing the date of ceremony). A local 'Qadi' (local Qadi means a religious person to conduct marriage) conducted the ceremony (...). I know my children will be bhumiputra, as they contain the blood of a bhumiputra, my wife. We are bringing them up following Malay social system. My son speaks in Malay and when Ayesha will be grown up, we will give her 'hejab' (a peace of cloth to cover the head).....not like ours."

The statement indicates that Kalim Miah tries his best to accustom into Malay custom. His children are native Malay speakers and with his wife he speaks in Malay as well. At home, he is totally a Malay speaker and follower of Malay custom. Outside of home, in 'Bangla Bazaar', among the Bangladeshi friends and brothers he speaks in Bengali. His restaurant's name is in Bengali and Malay language-- 'Prabashi kedai makanan' (foreign restaurant) and the place where they go for prayer is also named as 'Bangla surau'. However, a type of hybrid language can be found among these titles, though he is unaware about that. His attempt was to use Bengali vocabulary, but Malay words were added. For instance, the words 'kedai makanan' and 'surau' are collected from 'Bahasa Melayu' (Malay language). The word 'kedai makanan' means restaurant and 'surau' means Muslim prayer house. Even, when he was delivering the speech in front of his Bangladeshi brothers, besides Bengali he mentioned Malay words, such as, 'makan', 'minum', 'daging lembu' etc. He feels proud to parent his children following Malay social system, while at the same time, he has contact with his relatives in the origin country and he tries to proof his 'distant nationalism' (Glick Schiller, N. and G. Eugene Fouron, 2001) through a meeting for the country mates on a national day of Bangladesh. However, the instance of spending money for the get together can also be explained as business strategy to find customers for his manpower business. This argument can be made based on the fact that he is not bringing workers in without taking any fee. Rather, 'weak ties' are developed here based on commercial networking or in other words, by monetary exchange. Besides, not all Bangladeshis can get assistance, only his followers who support him in his competition with the members of the other group, even though they are Bangladeshis too. Stephen Castles' (1998) arguments can be taken into consideration in this regard. Through the maintenance of social networks and the "migration industry" he thought that migration converted into a "self-sustaining process". By the term "migration industry" Castles indicates the flow of migration guided and commanded by "commercial and other considerations", where agents and brokers are playing important roles. In the case of Kalim Miah moreover, the term 'long distant nationalism' can be ignored as well, since in his family life he follows Malay custom. In fact, for his integration into the host society he is trying to assimilate, while for business purpose Bangladeshi nationalism is nurtured by him. In other words, a kind of 'hybridism' is being formulated following his adaptation process.

5. Conclusion

Dabir Miah and Kalim Miah are the representatives of Bangladeshi migrant businessmen of 'Bangla Bazaar' in Malaysia who have managed for permanent settlement. They came as temporary workers to reach quick economic prosperity. Later, through inter-ethnic marriage with a 'bumiputra lady' (Kalim) and friendship with an Indian Muslim (Dabir) they started business. Within a short time span they reached their vantage points and became successful to upgrade their fortune. Instead of cutting the contacts with their home land, they converted into manpower agents and brought their fellow village mates, family members and relatives to Malaysia. In other words, for upward social mobility, they are nurturing nationalist and multi-ethnic networking ceaselessly that paves the way for a hybrid Malay-Bangladeshi culture in the receiving society.

'Bangla Bazaar' is a place of Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, where a type of 'transnational business system' has been developed by the Bangladeshis. It is an area where the presence of Bangladeshis, from workers to professionals, at any time of the day, for economic, social or recreational purpose, is very common. The phrase 'Bangla Bazaar' is framed by the migrants; it indicates the market place of Bangladeshis. In Malaysia, the local term for Bangladeshi migrants is 'Bangla' and in Bangladesh the word 'bazaar' means a hotspot where the flow of people, goods and money is very regular. People visit this place for necessary shopping and also to say 'hello' to their friends whom he may not find in any other place. Outside the state border of Bangladesh, in a busy place of Kuala Lumpur, where the local transport and any other kind of communication system is very habitual, Bangladeshi migrants have opened their business center. Starting from collecting Bangladeshi newspapers (after each 2 to 3 days newspapers are brought) to the probability of the withdrawal of ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, all kinds of information can be gathered from here. The display of Bangladeshi music videos, cinemas or dramas in the Bangladeshi shops is very common. A kind of restaurant business has been developed, targeting the Bangladeshi workers and students. It is also a place of celebration for Bangladeshi national days, religious and other cultural festivals. Migrant Bangladeshis flock together here to be free from loneliness and also to manage a better job, renewal of work permits, finding a scope for bringing relatives and friends (as workers) through the assistance of their country brothers (businessmen). It is transnational, because the migrant Bangladeshis have created a social field outside the geographic, cultural and political borders of Bangladesh. Though it is outside of national boundary, but the immigrants have formulated a kind of business network and social relationship that binds together both the countries of origin and receiving. This process of two-way relationship is sustained by the regular flow of information, remittances, goods (through business), people (either as migrant workers or through short visiting), communication channels (through phone, letters, internet, newspapers etc) and cultural practices (celebration of Bangladeshi national days like death anniversary of national leader, Independence Day, cultural festivals like the first day of Bengali new year etc). In fact, Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc Szanton (1994) are the pioneers who have tried to identify this process theoretically. According to them, "We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.... An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that trans-migrants sustain in both home and host societies. We are still groping for a language to describe these social locations."

However, in their transnational networking system a kind of nationalism can be seen in disguise with the accompanying business entrepreneurship. A strand of long distance nationalism may be found in their ideological attachment as well as social, political and economic involvement to the home country. Though they are affiliated to the host country through business partnership with the local, interethnic marriage and the concomitant family bindings, they still appeal for the welfare of their origin country. They don't have any right for casting votes in Bangladesh, but they are worried about the forthcoming national election of their home. In my opinion, by paying heed to Weber's study of the ethnic origins of nationalism this type of 'emotions' can be defined. In his definition of ethnic group, Weber (1922) argued, "Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonization or migration." It is stated that a combination of shared customs, similarities of physical type and actual memories of migration can lead to 'group formation' even in a new country.

However, the problem lies in the fact that Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia are not a homogenous body. At least two groups have been found in the study area that developed out of their diversified realities and interests. A kind of combative and collaborative liaison has been developed between and within the groups. Moreover, by showing their eagerness for the well-being of the home country as well as nationalism through selling Bangladeshi goods, they are enriching their business. They are the speakers and their followers are the listeners, who are paying charges for any kind of service. Crossing the border of community cohesion, networking opened out towards the incorporation of multiethnic people of that particular social setting. As has been noticed the introduction of hybrid identities among the migrants and their next generation is highly plausible.

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