Inter-Ethnic Marital Practice of Bangladeshi Diaspora—An Example of Diaspora Adaptation at this Age of Globalization

Nayeem SULTANA and Solvay GERKE

Abstract. During this period of globalization, international labor migration is a common reality. Attaining economic solvency and better future are the major causes among many that motivate people for migration at this moment. Current paper is an initiative to explore the rights, realities and survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants working in Peninsular Malaysia from the perspectives of social networking. In this context Bangladeshi Diaspora formation and settlement practices in the multi-cultural social setting of the host country will be explored, where migrants' integration and assimilation is strictly prohibited by the anti-integration migration policies. For this, sojourns' complex coping mechanisms and survival strategies will be presented here that were scrutinized through an intensive fieldwork among the Bangladeshi migrants of Peninsular Malaysia. How inter and intra-ethnic networking enabled migrant Bangladeshis to find a way of settlement and survive as well and the likelihood of the existence of a hybrid trans-national identity within the migrants and their newly developed inter-ethnic strong ties, will be presented in this paper.

Keywords: *Embedded realities, survival strategies, inter-ethnic ties, hybridism*

Introduction

The proliferation of literatures on the organizational pattern of the Diaspora generally conceptualizes immigrants, their social networks and survival strategies by the closed socio-cultural models of "structural functionalism"[38]. The idea that the migrants live in the receiving society, still remain primordial both in the sense of organizational structure and cultural behavior is found imperfect in the current study conducted among the returned and current Bangladeshi migrants. Instead, we have found and therefore would like to emphasize on the inter-ethnic (plurinational) marital practices of Bangladeshi migrants that create hybrid culture, business and identities in the *Bangla Bazaar*[39] of Kuala Lumpur.

---

[38] Radcliffe Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society.* London: Cohen, 1952.
[39] *Bangla Bazaar* is one of the hotspots of Bangladeshi migrants.

As a matter of fact, Floya Anthias in her seminal article entitled "Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity"[40] proposed alternative ideas about Diaspora. Evaluating the existing writings, she identified some drawbacks and criticized (these) as essentialized. Concerning transnational migration and ethnic relations, she noticed that most of the writings emphasize on the conceptions of "deterritorialised ethnicity", where primordial networks with home based ties (bonds) get the priority. She intends to focus on the arguments of globalization, non-nation based solidarities and intersectionality of different aspects, especially class, gender and "trans-ethnic" solidarities, while she is arguing for a less essentialized concept of Diaspora. To authenticate her arguments she proceeds discussing on major literatures (on Diaspora), for example, Hall[41] (1990), Gilroy[42] (1993), Cohen[43] (1997), Clifford[44] (1994) etc. Regarding these she finds some dissimilarity with the real world situation (empirical realities) and hence proposes guide lines for further research. She thinks that in the conventional understanding of Diaspora, race and ethnic relations are the main focuses, where historical and analytically informed vocabularies are not concentrated properly.

In fact, if we take into account her arguments for a less essentialized concept of Diaspora what she pretends very much related with the modern styles of transnational migration and refer to the ethnographic examples of this study we may notice that the instances of inter-ethnic marriage and the other forms of inter-ethnic ties become one of the significant coping strategies of Bangladeshi migrants. Hence like some other researches, the issue of assimilation and integration through inter-ethnic marriages as well as religious, cultural and ethnic pluralism of Malaysia converts into a significant part of this study.

In continuing this, experts are often found exploring the state of religious and ethnic pluralism in Malaysia referring to the Article 153 of the Constitution. For example, Yeoh[45] quoted this article when he was explaining religious pluralism of Malaysia. Mentioning from the Article 153 he stated that people who "profess the religion of Islam, habitually speak the Malay language, and conform to Malay

---

[40] Floya Anthias, "Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity", *Sociology, v32 n3 p557*, August 1998.

[41] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. J. Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

[42] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. London. Verso, 1993.

[43] Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1997.

[44] James Clifford, "Diasporas*", Cultural Anthropology* (9: 1994), 302-38.

[45] Christopher Rodney Yeoh, *Malaysia, Truly Asia? Religious Pluralism in Malaysia* (2006), p-2-5 [database on-line]; available at
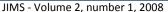http://www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=74415 .

customs" are permitted "for special reservation of quotas in three specific areas: public services, education, and business licenses, without harming the rights of other ethnic groups".

Like him, other studies also consider this article as part of an "ethnic bargain". It is described that the motivation for "mutual tolerance and respect" can be ascertained by this. Eventually, he thinks it will protect violence and keep intact of the ethnic and racial diversity of Malaysia. For understanding the advent of Islam in Malaysia as well as "mutual tolerance and respect", manifested among different ethnic groups, he emphasizes on historical perspectives and scrutinizes pre and post-colonial history of Malaysia. Besides, he also focuses on the hybrid identities. Since this pre and post-colonial history provides a good insight for understanding the status of integration and assimilation of Bangladeshi migrants into the receiving society, especially within the Muslim communities, in the next section we will proceed on it.

The discussion will show how Islam became a dominant religion of this region. Along with it, we will see the causes of peoples' immigration into the country from different parts of the world that may help us to notice the voluntary forms of assimilation and integration, practiced by different ethnic communities and religious groups. Additionally, it will explain on what context people prefer to change their previous religious identities and convert to Islam. Therefore, we will continue our discussion under the following sub-headings:

1.Advent of Islam in Malaysia, the state of Malaysians' culture and identities and the potential factors for generating inter-ethnic networking between Bangladeshis and other communities

2. Inter-ethnic marriage and the Malay customs

3. Inter-ethnic marriage and the rise of hybrid culture and identities

However, before entering into the discussion it should be mentioned that 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 among the returned and current (Bangladeshi) migrants in Bangladesh and Peninsular Malaysia. Based on qualitative research, semi-structured interviews, group discussion, observation 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.

Advent of Islam in Malaysia, the State of Malaysians' Culture and Identities and the Potential Factors for Generating Inter-ethnic Networking between Bangladeshis and Other communities

Malaysia was a centre for trade and commerce during the tenth century AD[46]. At that time, Buddhist and Hindu regulated (ancient) Malay kingdoms were discovered in the northern peninsular region of Malaysia. Due to its unique geographical location, which was in between Chinese and Indian civilizations, it turned into a busy area. Islam was not a native religion of Malaysia until 14th century. Rather, it was brought (into Malaysia) by the Arab traders from the Middle East. After the establishment of Sultanate of Malacca in the 15th century, Islam became a dominant religion over the Southeast Asian region. At this time, businessmen from Europe used to visit Malacca for buying Asian spices as they could not get it in their home country. Asian traders on the other hand, mushroomed in this trading zone in order to obtain foreign goods from the European merchants after selling their own products, including spices. However, sometimes, European traders needed to wait in Malacca for couple of months for a good condition of weather, suitable for their sail. It was mentioned in the study[47] that in time of strong severe monsoon winds Malacca helped traveling merchants to survive. Its strategic position was next to Sumatran land that contributed in this regard. Thus Malacca converted into a busy cosmopolitan city.

When the first ruler of Malacca, Parameswara, converted into a Muslim through getting married with the Muslim princess Malik Ul Salih of Pasai, Islam turned into a dominant religion. At that time, Islam entered into all the territories of the sultanate, Sumatra in Indonesia and northern Thailand. Local populace and traders changed their previous religious identities for Islam in order to be benefited through the affiliation with the ruler's religion. Nevertheless, there are the followers of other religious ideologies in Malaysia. According to Yeoh, Islam was not imposed on them; rather they practiced on their own, what is identified as an instance of "ethnic and religious pluralism in Malaysia".

Besides, there are many cases, where foreign traders such as Europeans and Chinese integrate themselves into the local Malay culture. They tried to accustom into the Malay customs and learned Bahasa Melayu. Along with it, these merchants settled down in Malaysia through inter-ethnic marriages with the local people of Malacca. Showing the example of *Peranakan* culture, where a hybrid or

---

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

"syncretic blend" of Malay and Chinese culture is practiced (until now) by their descendents, Yeoh provided an instance of cross-cultural marriage, solemnized between the sixth ruler of Malacca, Sultan Mansur Syah and a Chinese princess, Hang Li Po. As a result of it, until then (August 2006), there remains a group of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, who speak in Malay language and maintain the Buddhist tradition at a time, is depicted by him.

In this context, it is noteworthy to state that the cases of Bangladeshi migrants' integration and assimilation in the receiving country can be identified as another example of hybrid culture, what will be analyzed in the next section referring to the case of Kalim Miah[48]. However, before that let us find the following table where the potential factors for generating inter-ethnic or cross-cultural ties between Bangladeshis and other ethnic communities are presented briefly.

Table: Potential Factors for generating inter-ethnic networking between Bangladeshis and other ethnic communities

Embeddedness	Everyday realities and experiences	Types of ties	Actors of the ties	Survival strategies
Neighborhood	Relatedness through living space, common niche	1-Strong ties among the same economic and status groups (friendship)	Nepalese, Tamil Indian, Indonesians and Malays	1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict 2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members
		2- Weak ties with well-off people (business partnership)	Malay, Indian Muslim, Tamil Indians	1-To expedite their sources of earning 2- To cope with the existing institutional framework of the host society (for immigrant entrepreneurship) 3-To find a way of integration for upward mobility

---

[48] Kalim Miah is a respondent of this study.

| Co-workers | Common working environment, experience and principles | Strong ties (1-marital or affair relations, 2-working as a group of small scale vendors and 3-business partnership) | Malay, Indian Muslim, Indonesians | 1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict

2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members

3- To expedite their sources of earning

4- To cope with the existing institutional framework of the host society for immigrant entrepreneurship

5-To find a way of assimilation for upward mobility

6-To by-pass law about short-term recruitment of migrant workers |
| Common religious ideology (construction of 'Muslim brotherhood') | Similar notions of "halal and haram" (sacred/legal and impure/forbidden according to Muslim rites) and moral obligations to other Muslims, more or less common rituals of | 1-Strong ties (marital and affair relations) | Malay, Indonesians, Indian Muslims | 1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict

2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members |

	prayer, food, attire, festivals, duties etc.			3-To find a way of integration or assimilation for upward mobility 4- To by-pass law about short-term recruitment of migrant workers
		2- Weak ties (business relations)	Malay, Indian Muslims	1-To expedite their sources of earning 2- To cope with the existing institutional framework of the host society (concerning immigrant entrepreneurship)

Source: Semi-structured interviews, group discussion and observation

The table indicates that Bangladeshi migrants meet their inter-ethnic (both local and other migrant communities) counterparts and develop ties on the basis of neighborhood, working niche as well as common religious identities, where both (inter and intra-ethnic actors) are embedded in. They (respondents) develop these ties as strategies for survival in a foreign society, where they need to compete with co-ethnic members, other migrant workers and local people as well. They compete with each other for the scarce resources like job, increases of salary, housing etc. They also need to develop networks as they can protect themselves from their rivals. To ease their settlement in the host country, they attempt to strengthen their bargaining power and maneuver the existing institutions (norms, values on the code of conduct, dress, food, drinks, social interactions etc., policies about their permanent resident status, inter-ethnic marriage, ethnic enterprises etc.) that are imposed on them as foreign workers.

In fact, if we concentrate on the everyday discourses of the host country about its multi-ethnic communities, we may notice that the society bears some common perceptions regarding Bangladeshi migrants. These common notions appeared in daily newspapers as well as literatures on migrant workers. Besides, through their talks and behavioral attitudes, both experts (immigration authorities, some officials of Bank Negara, N.G.O officials, officials from Bangladesh High Commission, representatives from MTUC[49] etc.) and administrators (factory managers, supervisors) expressed their cognitions regarding Bangladeshi migrants, especially referring to the instances of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. Bangladeshis on the other hand, assisted to know the common proverbs and morals about them, while they were interviewed. Exploring these discursive practices it is found that the provided space for this community (Bangladeshis) is very limited and they are disgraced in the society. Most of them (un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) are allowed to stay there only as workers.

Identifying them (un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) as the "social problem makers" their marriage with locals was prohibited (by the Immigration Act). For example, it is mentioned that there are so many cases where Bangladeshi workers get married with the local ladies, though they are already married in Bangladesh. Later on, they leave their host wife and children when they determine to deport from the country. They also provide instances of the numbers of single mothers in Malaysia, who are left alone by their Bangladeshi husbands. Bangladeshis on the other hand, argued that there left no choice for them to stay with their Malaysian wife and children. They are deported by the authorities as soon as their work permits are expired. Highlighting cultural differences between Malaysia and Bangladesh, some of them stated that their Malaysian wife disagreed to join with them for Bangladesh, if they were requested in time of deportation. For example, when we asked Yunus Miah[50] whether he would bring his Malay wife to Bangladesh, he said,

> No. Nurmala does not want. She is afraid of Bangladeshi family life. She thinks that my parents and other relatives will torture her. She will not be permitted to work. Besides, she has nobody there. Rather, I am trying to settle down here. She is assisting me via her local relatives and friends. My daughter is a Bumeputera; managing PR will not be a big deal for me.

---

[49] Malaysian Trade Union Congress.
[50] One of the respondents of this study.

The case of Yunus is not a unique one; rather assimilation into the local culture is a common practice of Bangladeshis in the study areas, where inter-ethnic marriages are solemnized (between Bangladeshis and other communities). For example, Kalim Miah, one of the central Bangladeshi entrepreneurs of *Bangla Bazaar,* preferred to assimilate into the local culture. For his adaptation and upward mobility, he emphasized on local (Malay) custom (*adat*), instead of nurturing Bangladeshi cultural patterns (we will find more discussion in the next section). In fact, it is seen that Bangladeshis need to follow their inter-ethnic wife's custom, if they prefer to settle down on spouse visa, because the alternative one is not possible. Their Malaysian wives disagree to accustom into Bangladeshi culture considering it exploitative for them. As a result, when the system does not work properly, Bangladeshis need to go back bearing the criticism, like *"social problem makers"*.

Moreover, the home ministry and immigration authorities continuously suggested to "flush out"[51] undocumented migrant workers. "Ops against illegals soon"[52] is quoted in several times in the daily newspapers of Malaysia, where referring to the instances of Indonesians and Bangladeshis, the huge presence of undocumented workers are criticized. In fact, we notice in these texts that migrants are seen not as human beings, rather as the instruments for production. For example, instead of mentioning deportation or expatriation of undocumented workers, they are quoting the terms "flush out" of "illegals" as if they are "rubbish" (!) that needs to be cleaned. The term "illegal" is also inhuman on the ground that migrants are treated as criminals (!).

As a matter of fact, if we analyze the Immigration Acts of Malaysia, we find that the undocumented workers are considered as criminals in the host society. The Immigration Act[53] (especially Section 6) provides tough penalties including whipping and imprisonment for the migrants, who do not have valid work permit (*Jalan card*) and other important travel documents, like passport. Thus, undocumented migrants are criminalized for an administrative problem. It also barred the migrants from working for different employers except one that was mentioned in their work permit. Consequently, there always remains a risk for

---

[51] The Sun, 14ᵗʰ August 2004. "…. Flush out workers without permits."

[52] N12: Nation, 4ᵗʰ February 2006.

[53] Immigration Act (1959/63, amended 2002). According to the amended Immigration Act, undocumented workers will be punished imposing a (maximum) fine of RM 10000 or five years (not higher than five years) jail or both. Mandatory whipping (not more than six strokes) is also fixed as a penalty for the undocumented workers.

converting into undocumented workers (for all of the migrant workers) if they are sacked or loss the job due to bankruptcy of the company. Besides, it ruins workers' freedom of job selection. As a result, they convert into "bonded laborers" that increase the risks of harassment and exploitation. The following statement of the Home Affairs Minister (Malaysia) as well as common morals and talks will depict how Bangladeshis are perceived in the host society.

Statement of Home Affairs Minister:

"The abuse is glaring because Bangladeshis are not allowed to work here…They have blue eyes. They look like Hindi film actors and they create social problems here."[54]

Common Morals, Proverbs and Talks:

1-Tamil Indians: "We don't know any Bangladeshi in Port Klang area".

2-Bangladeshi Workers of Port Klang: "Tamils are jealous; they don't want to see us here. They lost their bargaining power for us."

3- Malay business partner: "Real Muslims can stay here and will be respected."

The above statements and parts of talks may remind us Foucault's arguments in one of his classical works, The Archaeology of Knowledge. In order to provide a "pure description of discursive events" he proposed a guideline. He wanted not only a concrete description of discursive events, but also the underlying causes of that. According to him,

The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how it is that one particular statement appeared rather than another? It is also clear that this description of discourses is in opposition to the history of thought. There too a system of thought can be reconstituted only on the basis of a definite discursive totality. But this totality is treated in such a way that one tries to rediscover beyond the statements themselves the intension of the speaking subject, his conscious activity, what he meant, or again, the unconscious activity that took place, despite himself, in what he said or in the almost imperceptible fracture of his actual words; in any case, we must reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from

---

[54] It was mentioned by the Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmed, which was quoted in New Straits Times, 13th March, 2006.

within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them.[55]

Let us summarize the main arguments from the above citation. Through the analysis of discourses he wanted to explore (1) the social context (2) embedded realities, (3) tacit and explicit consciousness of the actor (speaker) and the surroundings, (4) the hidden or intrinsic meaning of the speech, (5) institutions, conditions and socio-cultural boundaries that regulate the contents of speech, types of cognition and knowledge on a specific issue, (6) power relations among the subject (knowledge on a specific topic), speaker and the networks etc.

Applying the above points (for discourse analysis) if we explain the statement of Home Affairs Minister, we may identify anti-integration migration policies (of the host country) as the realities where Bangladeshis are embedded in. Though institutionally Bangladeshis are not welcomed for integration, but socially these migrants possess the chances for assimilation into the society. We may presume that local people (natives) prefer Bangladeshis as their "strong and weak ties"[56] that create a social context for inter-ethnic marriage and business relationship, if we consider the comment of a Malay business partner (of a Bangladeshi businessmen), "Real Muslims can stay here and will be respected".

Common religious ideology, for example, fortifies the consciousness of 'Muslim brotherhood' within different ethnic groups. Though they belong to different ethnic groups[57] (in the sense of primordial attachments, history and culture), but all the Muslims have common beliefs and perceptions regarding *Allah* (as the only one creator), *Quran Sharif* (holy Quran), *Makka Madina* (pilgrimage to sacred places) and Islamic rituals in their everyday life. In fact, while Cohen[58] was describing how religion might provide an "additional cement" for the rise of "diasporic consciousness" even within the members of different ethnic groups, Metcalf[59] focused on "Muslim space" created through rituals and "sanctioned practice" (s). Her conceptions of "Muslim space" does not demand any sovereign land ("juridically claimed territory"); rather she has described the concept adding

---

[55] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* (Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972), p27.

[56] Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *AJS volume* 78, 2 Number 4, 1973.

[57] Alan Barnard and Jonathon Spencer eds., *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Routledge, 1998), p-190-191.

[58] Robin Cohen, "Global Diasporas: An Introduction" in *Religion and Diaspora*, Steven Vertovec (WPTC-01-01), P-10.

[59] Barbara Metcalf, "Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities" in *Religion and Diaspora*, Steven Vertovec (WPTC-01-01, 1996), P-19.

three more ideas, like (1) "social space", (2) "cultural space" and (3) "physical space".

It was found that the religion of Islam not only worked as a platform for the rise of consciousness within Bangladeshis, Indonesians and Tamil Muslim Diasporas, but also it united Bangladeshis with Malay *bumiputeras*. Along with the faith in (only one) "Allah almighty" and his prophet Muhammad, the most obligatory duties (*salat/*five times ritual prayer in a day, *zakat*/giving alms to the poor, *sawm*/fasting during Ramadan and *hazz*/pilgrimage to Mecca), the common Islamic rites and ceremonies (relating to pregnancy, child birth, naming, schooling, initiation, sacrifice, marriage, death etc.), common festivals (like*Eid*) as well as the conceptions and practices of sacred *(halal)* and profane *(haram*) are the arenas of social, cultural and ideological engagement for the Muslims of the study areas. The respondents meet Malays, Tamil Muslims or Indonesians not only as their workmates, housemates or neighbors, but also interact with them in the local *surau* and mosque, because all of them are Muslims.

Consequently, owing to same religious background as well as regular correspondences through common living and working atmosphere, these groups get the chances for network building. Or in other words, their "every day forms of engagement"[60] provide them the opportunities for network building. While Bangladeshis develop networks with them as survival strategies and for upward mobility, the other ethnic communities are motivated by the religious ideology as well as business interest.

However, exploring the hidden or intrinsic meaning of the speech of Home Affairs Minister, "they have blue eyes; they look like Hindi film actors" we may demonstrate the tacit and explicit consciousness of the speaker (Minister) and the respective authorities of host country. Through his statements he wanted to regulate integration of Bangladeshis in Malaysia that consequently would reconstitute a new discourse emphasizing intra-ethnic mixing, instead of inter-ethnic one. However, though they imposed social and legal boundaries, but failed to control the cognition of local people and the social context associated with inter-ethnic ties (between Bangladeshis and local people).

Therefore, authorities of the receiving country try to warn the local people establishing a new discourse, where they highlight the negative impact of assimilation. At the same time, they also refer to the institutions (migration policy) of the country. They highlight that a ban is imposed on the immigration of

---

[60] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society. India and Beyond* (World Politics 53, April 2001), p- 362-398.

Bangladeshi migrants and speak on behalf of it considering them (Bangladeshi migrants) as the social problem makers. Thus, the authorities of the host country utilize their institutional power to deport Bangladeshis from the study areas and on the other hand, through discursive practices they are manipulating people's world view (knowledge) regarding the consequences of assimilation. Both these institutional and social dimensions of discursive practices demonstrate the hierarchical power relationships among the authorities of the receiving country (Home Affairs Minister, for example), local people and migrant Bangladeshis, where respondents of this study are embedded in.

Moreover, the statement is regulated by the dominant discourse of anti-integration migration policy that determines the contents of speech. This discourse of discourse may create a necessity for making reference from Foucault's work, where he tries to figure out power relationship with "discursive formations"[61] in society that controls the flow and types of knowledge. He proposes to see statements in the context ("field") of discourse and the related networks ("relations") that make hay for these (statements) to come out. Now, if we refer to the statement of Home Affairs Minister, we may postulate that he is representing the outlook (discourse) of the receiving country regarding its migrant workers (mostly un-skilled and semi-skilled workers). They want the existence of migrant workers only as the cheaper means of production (and nothing more), since the locals are reluctant to do these job.
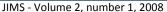
As a matter of fact, Mentioning Azizah's[62] arguments Abubakar[63] wrote that migrants are not allowed to stay in the host society for more than ten (10) years. Among other points it was mentioned that the high presence of un-skilled and semi-skilled laborers created job competition between migrant workers and local poor, especially after the 1997 financial crisis. Based on the above arguments and also evaluating the quoted statements of Bangladeshi migrants ("Tamils are jealous; they don't want to see us here. They lost their bargaining power for us")

---

[61] Michel Foucault, The *Archaeology of Knowledge*, (Tavistock Publications Limited., 1972), p-31.
[62] Azizah Kassim, "Profile of Foreign Migrant Workers in Malaysia: Towards Compiling Reliable
Statistics". Paper read at a Conference on 'Migrant Workers and the Malaysian Economy' organized by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 1998.
[63] Syarisa Yanti Abubakar, "Migrant Labour in Malaysia: Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis", (EADN Regional Project on the Social Impact of the Asian Financial Crisis, 2002), p. 16.

and Tamil Indians ("We don't know any Bangladeshi in Port Klang area"), we can presume the conflicting situation between Bangladeshis and Tamil Indians.

Under these circumstances, instead of avoidance, Bangladeshis try to develop strong (friendship) and weak ties (business partnership) with Tamil Indians as they can convince their ethnic members on behalf of them. They depend on other Tamil Indian friends and business partners in order to combat conflict with Tamil Indian rivals, since they are incapable to manage it depending only on intra-ethnic networks. Concerning this Varshney's conceptualizations on how to minimize ethnic conflicts is noteworthy. Identifying inter-ethnic networks as "agents of peace"[64], he has stated that if communities only remain within themselves and are not interconnected with other ethnic communities except their own, it may create more ethnic tensions and violence. Consequently, Bangladeshi migrants' networking with Tamil Indians can be identified as a positive step to minimize ethnic conflict between Tamil Indians and Bangladeshi Diaspora.

In fact, on the one hand, they perceive their well-off intra-ethnic weak ties as exploitative, while on the other, their strong ties are not so well-off. It is also less connected with the macro level authorities and hence does not possess enough power and information for upward mobility. Moreover, their embeddedness in the discriminatory immigration rules and anti-integration policies of the host country influence them to develop inter-ethnic ties mostly with other Muslim communities and partly, with Tamil Indians. Thus, they try to combat risks and by-pass laws for finding a way of settlement and upward mobility as well. Therefore, the dominant perception on primordial networking[65], where it is shown that migrants become organized solely within them because of the harsh realities in the host society, cannot be conceptualized as a general fact for all Diasporas. On the contrary, we need to focus empirical and embedded realities as well as historical aspects (if there is any) that regulate the types of networking.

And here we find the reflection of Anthias's arguments, where she intends to focus on globalization, non-nation based solidarities and also for a less essentialized concept of Diaspora. In fact, through this study we have found that

---

[64] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society. India and Beyond* (World Politics 53, April 2001), P- 363.
[65] Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron, *Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home.* Duke University Press, 2001. See also Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim, "Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United State", Journal of International Migration and Integration 2, 2001.

Bangladeshi migrants possess non-notation based ties that open a scope for the development of hybrid Bangladeshi-Malay identities and (hybrid) culture in the receiving country. In the next section we will proceed on this issue.

Inter-ethnic Marriage and the Malay Customs

Gerke in her article on inter-ethnic marriage in East Kalimantan, Indonesia states the following:

> 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.[66]

Referring to Nagata, she continues: "There are three aspects of this process, namely accepting Islam, Malay custom and Malay language"[67]

In fact, Kalim Miah of *Bangla Bazaar* is now staying in Malaysia after having married a Malay lady. In order to assimilate and integrate himself into Malay society, Kalim Miah had to only look at two aspects: Malay language and custom. Religion was not a topic, seeing that he already was a Muslim. Their wedding ceremony took place in Malaysia maintaining Malay custom. Due to both being Muslims and sharing the same religious faith, though there were similarities regarding marriage customs, still, there were differences between Bangladeshi and Malaysian marital patterns.

For example, in Bangladesh there is no system for the obligatory marriage certificate what we have seen in the cases of Malaysia. Through these mandatory courses groom and the would-be bride can learn about their respective duties to each other. After successful completion of the classes both the bride and groom achieve certificates for marriage that is totally an unknown issue in Bangladesh. On the other side, in Bangladesh providing dowry to husband and his family is very common among the less privileged classes of migrants, what we cannot see in

---

[66] Solvay Gerke, "Ethnic Relations and Cultural Dynamics in East Kalimantan: The Case of the Dayak Lady", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, (Oxford University Press, No.72, 1997), 176-187.
[67] Nagata 1974, quoted in Gerke1997, 176-187.

Malaysia. Though illegal[68] in Bangladesh, but practicing and asking for dowry in time of matrimonial ceremony, prevails in many sections of the society.

The idea that unemployment and underemployment of young males, especially in rural Bangladesh play key roles for practicing dowry[69] is found true concerning migrant Bangladeshis, who are married with other Bangladeshis. Since the required items and amount of cash for dowry payment are fixed depending on the grooms' family's demand, it helps to reduce the costs of the (groom's) family needed to purchase these amounts. Moreover, through the interview survey it is found that among different ways of earning the required amount of money for migrating to Malaysia, dowry (2.7%) from wife's part was one of the sources[70]. Besides, it also works as a symbol of economic solvency for the bride's family, where on the other hand, for the groom and his family, dowry acts as a proof of their higher social status and qualifications. Or in other words, it helps groom and his family to accumulate cultural capital (honor/prestige) within the networks of neighbors, friends and relatives. This argument is substantiated on the ground that it supports one of the social values which is, the higher the qualifications and social status of groom will be, the higher the payment for dowry will be demanded from the bride.

Referring to the rise of dowry practice in Bangladesh over the last 20-30 years Kabeer[71] depicted two major causes, such as, (1) males' (from all classes) integration into the "wider cash economy" and (2) devaluation of women's productive roles within the household. As a matter of fact, Kabeer's argument reminds us the field situation where Sanda, one of the female respondents of this study was divorced on this ground. Like her, there are other cases where bride's parents cannot contribute to the whole amount of dowry at once and consequently this opens a scope for husband's part to give divorce to the wife. In fact, since Sanda's parents failed to pay the full amount of dowry immediately after her marriage, she was reminded by her husband and parents in- law several times. Being failed to pay the due she had to accept divorce. Later on, in order to protect

---

[68] According to The Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, a husband and his family will face death penalty or life imprisonment if his wife is murdered (or they attempt to murder her) for dowry.

[69] Md. Awal Hossain Mollah, *Combating Violence against Women in South Asia. An Overview of Bangladesh*, (http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY /UNPAN020004.pdf, retrieved 2nd August 2007).

[70] The other sources were, (a) selling arable land (37.3%), (b) friends and relatives (40%), (c) father' provident fund (18.7%) and respondent's provident fund (1.3%).

[71] Naila Kabeer, *Subordination and Struggle: women in Bangladesh* (*New Left Review*, No.168. March 1988), p. 106.

herself from the neighbors' criticism (because of divorce) she decided to migrate to Malaysia, where she was supported by her parents. As a result, it is not surprising that female migrants' parents try to save remittance in order to buy "gifts" (dowry) for their daughters' marriage, what is found in time of field research.

Now if we compare the above situation with the Malaysian marital system for Muslims, we will find that husband needs to pay *mahr* to the wife, instead of the opposite one. Moreover, economic solvency is one among other capabilities that helps the groom to obtain permission for marriage. Otherwise, he will be unable to get registration for his marriage and hence the events of staying together of the couple will be considered as *illegal* from the point of view of *Shari' ah.*[72] However, though there are so many constraints regarding wedding practices in Malaysia, especially in the case of inter-ethnic marriage, still some[73] male respondents conducted inter-ethnic marriage. They developed inter-ethnic strong ties in order to find a way of upward mobility and for settling down permanently, what is already discussed in the previous sections. Regarding this let us consider Kalim Miah's following statement, where he emphasized dissimilarities between Bangladeshi and Malay marital customs. According to him,

> Still a few dissimilarities existed. We could not get married before obtaining a certificate of marriage course. I had to provide her full part of mahr immediately when the marriage was solemnised. Still I feel relief hoping and expecting for a better future. I know my children will be *bumiputera*, as they contain the blood of a *bumiputera*. Yah--sister, my wife is a *bumiputera*.

Actually, according to Muslim customs wife deserve *mahr*, what we may see in Malaysia. Since through marriage she will be subjugated totally under the authority of her husband, *mahr* is considered as her right. It is also explained as a symbol of respect shown by the husband to his wife. The property or money provided as *mahr* remained bride's property and hence it is not comparable to

---

[72] The Shari' ah is the holy law of Islam based on Quran and Sunnah. In Malaysia Muslims are administered by Islamic law. Though Islamic laws are governed both by Shari' ah and Civil Courts, but the Article 121 (1A) of the Constitution of Malaysia sanctioned special power and authority to the Shari' ah Courts for the management of Islamic laws. The Shari' ah law is confined only for Muslims. For more information please find Zaitoon Dato Othman. Islam in Malaysia Today and its Impact. "The Practice of Shari' ah Laws in Malaysia" available at http://www.muslim-lawyers.net/news/datoothman.html/ retrieved 3rd August 2007.

[73] Amongst the married respondents 9% migrants are married with locals. The others were already married before their migration to Malaysia.

bride's price. Kabeer argued that the provision of *mahr* was also common in Bangladesh in the past. Identifying it as bride's property she continued that bride and sometimes her family used to receive gifts, such as jewellery and clothes, from the groom's family. Moreover, instead of full payment, part of the *mahr* was kept as unpaid. They used to do it as if the wife could claim the rest amount in cash, if she was divorced without any reason. Thus, according to Kabeer, earlier *mahr* acted as a restraint to divorce.

However, through this study it is found that though an amount was fixed as *mahr* (for Sanda) in the *kabin nama* (marital contract), but it was not a handsome amount in comparison to the sum of dowry that she supposed to pay to her husband. Moreover, it was mentioned (by Sanda) that her *mahr* was totally unpaid and it failed to protect divorce. Rather, on being failed to pay the dowry she had to accept divorce. Consequently, it can be stated that Sanda's (intra-ethnic marriage) case is not similar to Kalim Miah's (inter-ethnic marriage) case. On the contrary, it is found that in Bangladesh amongst these systems of payments, demand for dowry (wife needs to pay to her husband) is obligatory, where *mahr* (husband is supposed to pay to his wife) stands for a marker of symbolic payment. Consequently, the roles of dowry are stronger than *mahr* in Bangladesh, though most of its citizens are Muslims. While in the case of Malaysia payment of *mahr* to the bride is not only obligatory for the Muslim groom, but also he is not allowed to ask for dowry to his wife.

Since Kalim Miah was trying to assimilate him into Malay community in order to be benefited as the husband and father of *bumiputera*s (the right of Malay *bumiputera* is protected under Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia), he followed Malay customs in his nuptial ceremony with a Malay lady. In fact, Malay wedding ceremony is a combination of Islamic rites and traditional Malay rituals. For example, Kalim Miah's marriage ceremony lasted for seven days that was an instance of Malay custom. Among Malay community grand ceremony was welcomed for wedding and hence Kalim needed to follow that ritual. Kalim, therefore, spent "a lot of money" for the entertainment of guests in his wedding ceremony. In the feast, he continued that one cow, two goats and one hundred twenty two chickens were slaughtered, where not only Malays, but also some of his Bangladeshi friends were invited. Besides, he needed to follow different Malay rituals in several phases of his wedding ceremony. In Kalim Miah's following words,

Before marriage, representatives from my side, my village mates and brothers went to her parents with 'hantaran' (odd number of gift boxes are taken to the bride's house during the proposal ceremony). A local 'Qadi' (religious

marriage celebrant) conducted the ceremony. We are bringing them (children) up according to Malay customs. My son speaks in Malay and when Ayesha will be grown up, we will give her a *hejab* (a peace of cloth to cover the head)*.*

The statement indicates that Kalim Miah tries his best to adopt Malay custom in order to find a way of integration and assimilation in the Malay community. He emphasized Malay customs not only in marital rituals, but also in his post marital life through parenting his children according to Malay rituals. In this context it is noteworthy to mention that though Kalim adopted Malay custom, but he had no clear-cut idea about the internal meaning of any custom. He pursued that in order to find a way of integration in the receiving country that might enable him to be a rich man. Kalim's integration process, therefore, makes a room for making references from Gerke's work, where she was explaining how Aneu converted into a Kutai without having any deeper understanding of the standard practices of *masuk Melayu*.

However, to have a concrete account of Kalim's assimilation into Malay community, happened through the persuasion of Malay customs in his marriage with a Malay *bumiputera* lady, let us see the following aspects. These were narrated by this respondent while he was interviewed on the question of his marital ceremony. The key practices of his marital ceremony are,

- Marriage course
- Proposal ceremony
- Engagement ceremony
- Wedding ceremony
- State ceremony

In the next part we will see a description of these aspects as presented by Kalim.

Marriage Course

Before marriage Kalim Miah and his would-be wife attended two months course, which is called 'Course on marriages'. This course provided them insights into the responsibilities of man as a husband and woman as a wife. Government wants this course to be completed before marriage, because many of its citizen and immigrants marry, but they forget their responsibilities. But, however, he had to obtain permission from the Government for his inter-ethnic marriage, even earlier than their completion of marriage course. In that context, it was necessary to show

his economic solvency. He justified that he could maintain his family. Besides, one of the rules for inter-ethnic marriage is to give a proof of his unmarried or single status. Even, if the groom has previous wife he will have to divorce her. The divorce letter first to be certified by local administration of Bangladesh, and later it has to be endorsed by the Bangladesh High Commission. Thus, they come out to get married.

Proposal Ceremony

According to Malay custom proposal must go from the groom's side to bride's side, consequently, he is represented by some of his friends and relatives. They visited bride's house with gifts. They took seven gift boxes for the bride and her family. One of the gift items was holy Quran and another one was *tikar sembahyang* (prayer mat). Besides, chocolates, flowers, ring and dresses were the other gift items. Then, groom's relatives and friends were treated with a special meal. Before getting proposal wife's part used to know that a proposal was coming, so they were prepared for that with gifts. Since Kalim's representatives brought seven gift boxes, bride's part had to provide eight boxes. That bride's part needs to reimburse it adding one more box is a local ritual. Then proposal was accepted and they discussed about the engagement date. In the same day they also fixed the date of wedding. How the ceremony will be arranged and the sources of probable expenses were the topics of discussion. Kalim Miah had to provide dowry to the bride's part for the expenses of ceremony, what is uncommon in Bangladesh. They decided to have a combined grand party at bride's house and Kalim Miah also arranged a separate programme in *Bangla Bazaar*, where not only Malays, but also Bangladeshis were invited.

Engagement Ceremony

Since Kalim Miah had no female relatives in Malaysia, his friend's (a Bangladeshi businessman of *Bangla Bazaar* and also a member of the Noakhali group) wife presented engagement ring to the bride on behalf of him. In fact, according to the Malay custom, engagement ring is supposed to be provided by a senior female relative to the bride. Besides, showing respect to the Malay custom his friends arranged a tray with clothes, cosmetics, food, fruits etc. as a gift for the bride and her family, when they visited them at the engagement ceremony. However, this ritual is not uncommon among the well off people in Bangladesh, where bride and groom's relatives visit each other with engagement ring and gift items.

Wedding Ceremony

In fact, in wedding ceremony Kalim Miah needed to follow both Malay customs and Islamic rites. For example, along with the provision of *mahr* the ceremony was under the charge of a *Qadi* (a religious priest, schooled in Islamic laws). The *Qadi* also reminded them about the Islamic law concerning marriage. Their respective duties to each other as well as the importance of trust in family relationship were spelled out (by the religious marriage celebrant).
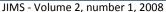
In the wedding ceremony Kalim Miah provided full part of *mahr* to his wife. It was a written contract. There was no system of forgiveness or half payment of *mahr*, what we usually find in Bangladeshi marital systems. Kalim Miah was taught earlier that he should agree boldly that he accepted the bride and would pay the agreed upon *mahr.* Otherwise, the *Qadi* would have to solemnize the declaration ceremony again if Kalim Miah did not accept all the conditions firmly. Or in other words, he was warned not to fumble as it might create suspicion regarding his wishes to marry the bride. Consequently, in order to be welcomed in the Malay community Kalim Miah followed that ritual.

State Ceremony

After the wedding ceremony, Malays prefer to arrange another ritual what is called sitting in the state. In that context, he and his wife were considered king and queen of that day. Though Kalim was a Bangladeshi, still he dressed himself in traditional *baju kurung* (traditional Malay dress) like his Malay wife. Carrying a traditional dagger Kalim accompanied his Malay wife who wore gold made jewellery. They tried to appear as a king and queen and then sat on a decorated dais what is called *pelamin* in Bahasa. This stage resembled as the king and queen were sitting in the state.

Thus, Kalim Miah tried utmost to incorporate himself into Malay community through inter-ethnic marriage. In that context, without raising any questions he followed Malay customs. Even, after his marriage he tried to maintain Malay custom while he was with his wife and children. Their (Kalim and his wife) similar religious background and his persuasion of Malay customs were the means that created a "social space of networks (inter-ethnic strong and weak ties) and identities"[74] (hybrid) outside of his (Kalim) home country. His religious background

---

[74] Barbara Metcalf, "Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities" in *Religion and Diaspora*, Steven Vertovec (WPTC-01-01, 1996), P-19.

as a Muslim and the acceptance of Islamic rites and Malay customs as well as Bahasa opened a "cultural space"[75] in the host country, where he interacts and nurtures his inter-ethnic strong and weak ties for finding a way of permanent settlement and consequent upward mobility in the receiving country.

For the interaction within his inter-ethnic networks and to determine the native language of his son, though he prefers Bahasa, but however, for his own case, he could not protect the mixture of Bengali and Bahasa. In the same way, his attempts of assimilation into the Malay community have resulted into hybrid identities and (hybrid) culture. This hybridism can be seen at his newly created "physical space"[76] surrounded by inter-ethnic strong and weak ties and also at his business enterprise of the *Bangla Bazaar* area, among the Bangladeshi migrants. Therefore, unlike fully echoing Metcalf's ideas of "imagined maps of Diaspora Muslims"[77], the situation of Kalim's integration rather remind us Vertovec's following accounts on Diasporas,

Diaspora has arisen as part of the post modern project of resisting the nation-state, which is perceived as hegemonic, discriminatory and culturally homogenizing. The alternative agenda—now often associated with the notion of Diaspora—advocates the recognition of hybridity, multiple identities and affiliations with people, causes and traditions outside the nation-state of residence.[78]

We will discuss on the issue of hybridism in the next section.

Inter-ethnic Marriage and the Rise of Hybrid Culture and Identities

Example One:

Through his staying and working in a factory of Kuala Lumpur, Kalim Miah managed to learn Bahasa Melayu even before his marriage. As his wife was a native Melayu speaker, he adopted this language as well. His children are native Melayu speakers and with his wife he also speaks Melayu. Hence, at home, he is totally a Melayu speaker and follower of Malay custom. Thus he was trying to assimilate into Malay community at the expense of his own mother-language, Bengali.

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid. By the term "physical space", the author intends to mean the dwelling and community houses founded in the new settings, away from homeland.

[77] Ibid. By the term "imagined maps of Diaspora Muslims" Metcalf indicated those spaces of Muslims that are created in a new setting through the combinations of social, cultural and physical spaces (of Muslims).

[78] Steven Vertovec, *Religion and Diaspora* (WPTC-01-01), P-5.

However, outside the home, in Bangla Bazaar, among the Bangladeshi friends and brothers he speaks Bengali. His restaurant's name is in Bengali and Melayu language –Prabashi Kedai Makanan (foreign restaurant) – and the place where they go for prayer is also named as Bangla Surau. A type of hybrid language can be found among these titles. His attempt was to use Bengali vocabulary, but Melayu 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 a speech in front of his Bangladeshi brothers, besides Bengali he mentioned Melayu words, such as, makan, minum, daging lembu etc.

Example Two:

Kalim Miah and his wife have two children, one son (5 years old) and one daughter (3 years of age). Although in Bangladesh, there is no system of affixing father's name and title with the offspring's name, two words have been added to his children's names. 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.

He feels proud to parent his children following Malay custom, while at the same time, he has contact with his relatives in the country of origin and he tries to proof his "distant nationalism"[79] 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 a 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. 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,

---

[79] Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron, *Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Duke University Press, 2001).

while for business purpose he nurtures Bangladeshi nationalism. In other words, a kind of 'hybridism' is being formulated following his adaptation process.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, Kalim Miah is one of the representatives of Bangladeshi migrant businessmen of Bangla Bazaar in Malaysia, who has managed to receive the status of permanent residency. He came as a temporary worker looking for economic wealth. Later, through inter-ethnic marriage with a bumiputera lady he started business. Within a short time span he reached his vantage points and became successful to upgrade his fortune. Instead of cutting the contacts with the homeland, he converted into a manpower agent and brought his fellow village mates, family members and relatives to Malaysia. In other words, for upward social mobility, he is nurturing nationalist and multi-ethnic networking ceaselessly that paves the way for a hybrid Malay-Bangladeshi culture in the receiving society.

However, it is noteworthy to mention that the arenas of engagement among Muslims, both Diasporas and *bumiputera* Malays, not only create peaceful co-existence, but also in some contexts, it generates tensions between powerful locals and the migrant Bangladeshis. In fact, apart from successful integration, there are also other stories that represent migrants' unequal capabilities, intra and inter- ethnic exploitations as well as the anti-integration migration policies of the receiving country.

Consequently, we have tried to analyze the micro and macro level socio-economic, cultural, political, institutional and ideological frameworks and realities, where migrants are embedded in and try to cope with. These are explored in order to evaluate the nature of Bangladeshi Diaspora organizational structure. Reviewing (1) the nature of migrants' embedded realities, (2) examining the roles (as survival strategies and for upward mobility) of inter and intra-ethnic networks and (3) assimilation processes of Kalim Miah, we may come up with the conclusion that Bangladeshi migrants do not come across a homogeneous reality in the receiving society. Rather, we have seen multi-dimensional embedded realities of migrants that are dealt with the formation of hybrid identities and culture in the receiving country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abubakar, Syarisa Yanti, Migrant Labour in Malaysia: "Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis", EADN Regional Project on the Social Impact of the Asian Financial Crisis, 2002.

Anthias, Floya, "Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity", *Sociology*, v32, n3 (1988): p557(24).

Clifford, James, *Diasporas*. Cultural Anthropology 9, (3), 1994.

Cohen, Robin, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, London: UCL Press, 1997.

Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972.

Gerke, Solvay, "Ethnic Relations and Cultural Dynamics in East Kalimantan: The Case of the Dayak Lady"*, Indonesia and the Malay World*. Oxford University Press, No.72, (1997): 176-187.

Gilroy, Paul, *The Black Atlantic*. London. Verso, 1993.

Glick Schiller, Nina and George Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*. Duke University Press, 2001.

Granovetter, Mark S, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *AJS volume* 78, 2 Number 4, 1973.

Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed*.* J. Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Kabeer, Naila, "Subordination and Struggle: women in Bangladesh", *New Left Review*, No.168, 1988.

Kassim, Azizah, "Profile of Foreign Migrant Workers in Malaysia: Towards Compiling Reliable Statistics". Paper read at a Conference on 'Migrant Workers and the Malaysian Economy' organized by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 1998.

Metcalf, Barbara, "Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities", *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe,* ed. B. Metcalf Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Mollah, Md. Awal Hossain, *Combating Violence against Women in South Asia. An Overview of Bangladesh*. Database on-line. Available at http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/ documents/APCITY/UNPAN020004.pdf , retrieved 2nd August 2007.

Radcliffe Brown, A.R., *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London: Cohen, 1952.

Vertovec, Steven, "Religion and Diaspora". WPTC-01-01. Paper presented at the conference on 'New Landscapes of Religion in the West', School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 2000.

 Yeoh, Christopher Rodney, *Malaysia, Truly Asia? Religious Pluralism in Malaysia*. Database on-line. Available at http://www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=7441 retrieved 3rd August 2006.

Zhou, Min and Rebecca Kim, "Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United State", *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 2 (2), 2001.

Newspapers

The Sun, 14th August, 2004.

N12: Nation, 4th February 2006.

New Straits Times, 13th March, 2006.