"Bihari" Identity in Bangladesh: Unraveling the Diasporic Dynamics

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Abstract

The term diaspora is etymologically ambiguous. If on the one hand it is burdened with dispersal, on the other hand it stimulates new possibilities of settlement. People known as diaspora are usually people who have dispersed away from their homeland and, under the tension of not being able to fully assimilate themselves into the existing settlement, attempt to reproduce a new social and cultural formation with a distinct identity tied to their origin or homeland. The Urdu-speaking diaspora living in Bangladesh was born from the dreadful experiences of partition refugees in colonial India like sectarian riots and bloodshed spread in various Indian states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab since 1946. But they are generally referred to as "Bihari." The "Bihari" diaspora was identified as "Muhajir" prior to 1971, and subsequently as "stranded-Pakistanis," "stranded non-Bengalis," "non-Bengalis," "Biharis," "non-locals," "non-vernacular," etc. As a diaspora, the "Biharis" have been subjected to multiple travails, both through dispersal and re-settlement. The "becoming" and "being" of these people are determined by the ongoing interplay of history, culture, and power. In this context, this anthropological study has been conducted to unveil the nature of the diasporic dynamics surrounding the identity of the "Bihari" community living in Bangladesh, because this is currently underrepresented in studies of "Bihari" individuals. This paper conceptualizes the diasporic identity of this "Bihari" people, traces its diasporic dynamics by exploring the internal sects and diverse social strata of the people, and explores trajectories of inferiority to deny their diasporic identity.

Keywords: identity; homeland; partition; diaspora; otherness

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Introduction

In contrast to being constant, migration has never been remarkable historically. Like other social science disciplines, anthropology might be accused of seeing movement as more unusual than stable dwelling (Heyman, 2006). As humanitarian crises such as displacement create a migratory background, and when migration evolves into diaspora, the importance of migration studies in anthropology increases. However, diasporas are not formed automatically by migration alone, and neither every immigrant nor every migration results in a diaspora (Ahmed, 2000). Bangladesh, like many other regions, has diaspora communities. When looking into the identity background of the people living in this region, the Mughal rule can be identified as a special historical moment, which began during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Although the great Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) appears to have had no specific territory when he ascended to the throne, at the time of his death this famous conqueror left behind an empire stretching from Kabul to Bengal and from the Himalayas to Ahmednagar (Karim, 2012). He divided the Mughal empire into twelve provincial units, which were then called Subahs (Nasrin, 2012). Among these, both Bihar and Bengal were ecologically diverse but prosperous regions where the growing potential for agriculture and trade was evident. The British, as the next rulers, also completely occupied these two attractive regions militarily, economically, and politically. While South Asians, Europeans, and others continue to represent the Mughal Empire in shifting ways today, Hindutva continue to identify all Muslims in India as alien, regardless of their ancestry, as descendants of the Mughals (Fisher, 2016). Since 1946, Urdu-speaking Muslims from various Indian states, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab, have migrated to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). Due to the dreadful experience of partitioning in colonial India, the populace was uprooted from their homes. Not only were people expelled across borders for practicing specific religions, but they were also subjected to horrific riots regardless of their religious identification. Since people cannot be forced to live in such insecurity, people who were once permanent residents of one place become refugees in another (Nair, 2023, p. 37). The widespread violence of partition in 1947, which killed millions and displaced over 10 million, has reinforced and reshaped various perspectives on the history of the Mughal Empire (Fisher, 2016, p. 236). As a result of sectarian riots, bloodshed, and isolated incidents in India from 1946 to 1964, this refugee flow persisted not just before 1947's split, but also for decades afterward. Given that the refugees originated from India, they are generally referred to as "Bihari." They were referred to as "refugees" or "Muhajir"[1] in newly founded Pakistan, but were considered as an Urdu-speaking minority. During the 1971 liberation struggle of Bangladesh, the majority of this Muslim population sided with West Pakistan, and some openly collaborated with the Pakistani Army and participated in the terrible extermination of Bengalis. Therefore, in independent Bangladesh, "Bihari" people are labeled as "dalal" or Pakistani Genocide wartime collaborators (Siddiqi, 2013). Pakistan welcomed only a small number of "Biharis" despite having approved two separate agreements in 1973 and 1974 to return Pakistani citizens who had elected to leave the country. The majority were left behind. Overnight, they became "stateless" refugees without citizenship residing in camps in Bangladesh. In the interim, two or three new generations of the Urdu-speaking minority, born in Bangladesh, have emerged and are attempting to assimilate into mainstream Bengali culture and society. Some of these Urdu-speaking people were allowed to settle outside the camp from the outset, and a small number of them settled in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna,

[1] An Arabic word meaning migrant in English. The term Muhajir was used to honor those Urdu-speaking people who were forced to migrate from India to Pakistan in 1947.

Sylhet, and the northern districts of Bangladesh, particularly Syedpur; they have already been incorporated into mainstream society.

Although some elderly "Biharis" wanted to stay Pakistanis and were willing to wait forever to go there, the young generations born in Bangladesh after 1971 do not want to go to Pakistan (Majumder, 2008). They assert they are Bangladeshi. In 2008, the Urdu-speaking Peoples Youth Rehabilitation Movement launched a lawsuit in Bangladesh to assert their rights. The Bangladesh High Court recognized the Urdu-speaking people, once stateless and commonly known as "Biharis," to be Bangladeshi citizens if any of them did not deliberately refuse Bangladeshi citizenship. Under court decision, they are also entitled to national identification cards and voting privileges from the Government of Bangladesh (Türk, 2014 and UNHCR, 2012). Due to the fact that Urdu-speaking young people feel themselves to be Bangladeshi by birth, they exerted great effort to obtain Bangladeshi citizenship in order to obtain basic rights to higher education and better career chances; thus, they applauded the court's ruling (Wasty, Ahsan, Holmes & Maguire, 2016). In addition, the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) reaffirmed Pakistan as their country of origin and indicated a willingness to exercise their citizenship rights only after returning to Pakistan (Majumder, 2008). The younger generation has neither a mental attachment nor actual experience with Pakistan, but the older generation has both. This is not a simple consequence of the generation gap between the two generations; rather, it is a complex consequence of diasporic transformation, which is gradually perceptible across generations and influenced by a variety of motivating factors, including age, sex, status, citizenship issues, and levels of interaction and bonding with nearby Bengalis.

Study Objectives

In Halishahar, Jhawtala, Ferozshah, Khulshi, Raufabad, Hamjarbag, Shershah, and Sadarghat areas of Chittagong, initial study of this research finds a "Bihari" diasporic generation that has evolved through at least three to four generations over the past seven and a half decades. Though studies involving the "Bihari" community are not uncommon, their diasporic identity is largely ignored, or the disadvantages of camp life are emphasized. Diaspora dynamics across generations is currently underrepresented in studies of "Bihari" individuals. To explore that, this study has been conducted from anthropological perspectives, which conceptualizes the diasporic identity of this "Bihari" people, traces its diasporic dynamics by exploring the internal sects and diverse social strata of the people, and explores trajectories of inferiority to deny their diasporic identity.

This paper is presented in multiple parts. The first part contains the focus of the study, the second outlines its research methodology, and the third analyzes relevant concepts and theoretical approaches. The fourth part examines the identity of this "Bihari" community as a diaspora. The fifth part investigates the dynamics of this diasporic identity according to differences in sectarian identity and social strata. The sixth part presents the trajectories of inferiority to denial as the most crucial context of this diasporic identity. And finally, in the seventh part the conclusion is drawn by presenting the results of the research.

Methodology of the study

As a better model of fieldwork, anthropologist Agar (1980) has proposed using the "funnel approach." In this model, fieldwork begins on a certain broad track but gradually narrows like a funnel following specific research questions, which clarify the findings. I conducted my fieldwork following this "funnel method," as it seems relevant to the research

topic. Two weeks of pre-research tracking and necessary contacts were maintained to select suitable field sites for this study.

Field sites

This research aims to unveil the nature of the diasporic dynamics surrounding the identity of the "Bihari" community living in Chittagong city, because this is currently underrepresented in studies of "Bihari" individuals. Field sites have been chosen considering the multi-sited nature of this investigation to unravel the diasporic dynamics of "Bihari" identity in Bangladesh. Marcus (1995), a prominent anthropologist in the field of anthropological research, argues through his concept of multi-sited ethnography that the field sites should not be confined within any specific boundary (Amelina & Barglowski, 2019).

The main field site of this study is Chittagong. That is, Halishahar, Jhawtala, Ferozshah, Khulshi, Raufabad, Hamjarbag, Shershah and Sadarghat—these eight areas of Chittagong city—have been selected as the field site of this research. According to the Chittagong City Corporation, these areas can be identified respectively as Ward No. 2 Jalalabad, Ward No. 7 West Sholashar, Ward No. 8 Sulakbahar, Ward No. 9 North Pahartali, Ward No. 11 South Kattali, Ward No. 13 Pahartali, Ward No. 26 North Halishahar, and Ward No. 31 Alkaran.

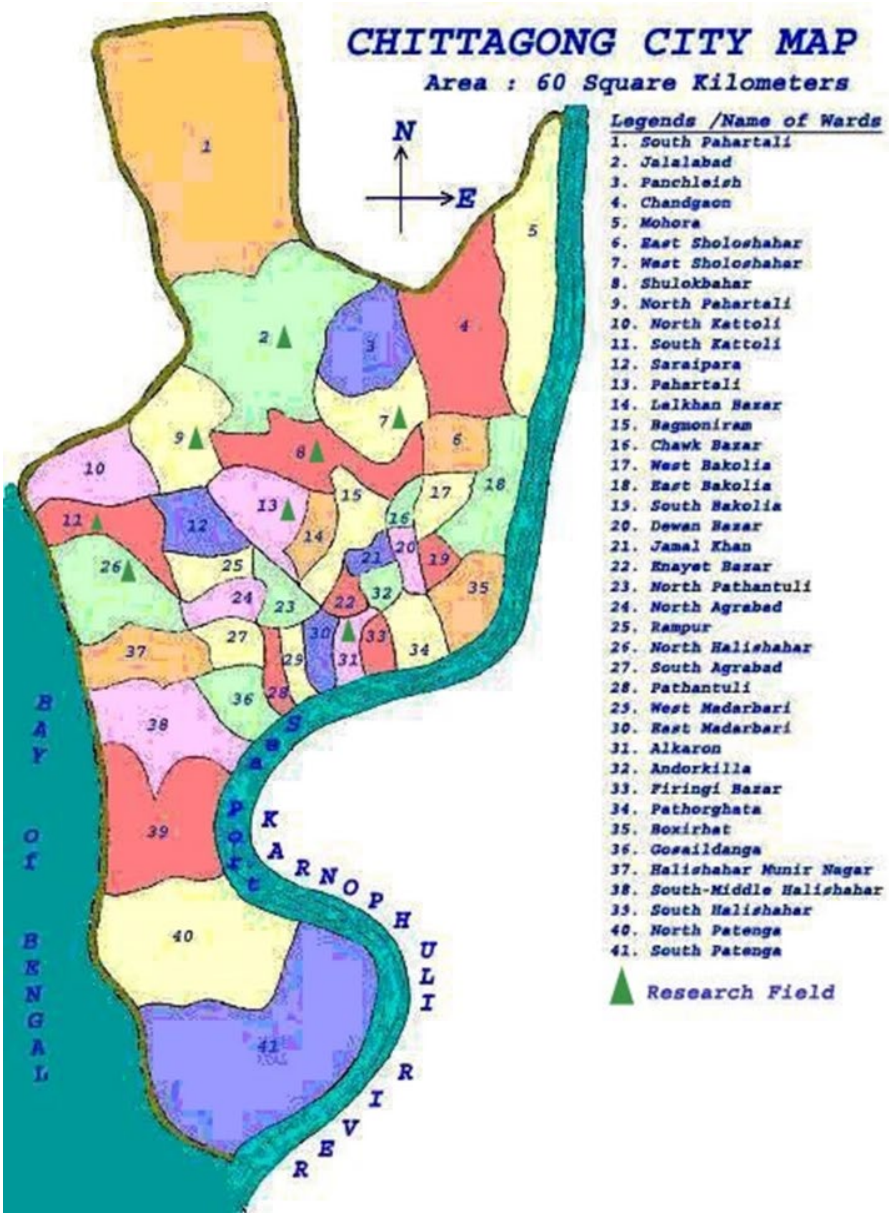

Figure 1: Specific locations of the main field sites on the Chittagong City Corporation map (Source: Personally collected and then self edited)

However, in the next stage, Dhaka, Jessore, and Khulna were included for brief fieldwork to understand the diasporic dynamics. Specifically, the locations of these three places are the Geneva Camp area and Mirpur-11 area of Mohammadpur in Dhaka, East Barandi Para and West Barandi Para in Jessore, and Khalishpur and Altapol Lane in Khulna. In exploring the diasporic dynamics of "Bihari" identity in Bangladesh, this study focuses on "Bihari" settlements, the location of "Bihari" camps, and the mixed settlements of "Bihari" and Bengalis in their surrounding areas at each field site. In pre-fieldwork communication, it is known from elderly informants like Suleman of Halishahar Bihari Camp in Chittagong that in the immediate aftermath of Bangladesh's independence, the Urdu-speaking people of that time took temporary shelter in their nearby schools or other large buildings to save their lives. But according to them, due to various reasons caused by the cruel irony of their fate, these temporary shelters turned into Bihari camps where many people remain, stuck for generations.

After picking the field-sites, I was able to build a complete research design by assessing the total scenario for an additional one week. Then I conducted five weeks of fieldwork continuously in two stages for a total of ten weeks, as well as two weeks of fieldwork in three separate stages in the other fields outside Chittagong. Above all, maintaining seamless communication at various levels at the field sites made this fieldwork more effective. The fieldwork was conducted in 2022-2023.

Informants: selection process and identity

In order to comprehend the "Bihari" diaspora in Chittagong city, the voices of informants with varying socioeconomic and political standing were protected by ensuring as much gender and other sorts of equality as possible. In addition, the representation of multiple generations of informants is necessary to reveal the diasporic shift from generation to generation, so Sunni and Shia informants are separated into five age groups. The first category included respondents aged 10 to 17, then those aged 18 to 35, 36 to 55, 56 to 65, and those older than 65 years of age.

Table 1: Age groups and types of studied "Bihari" people

Age group /Type	Generations	Sunni "Bihari"	Shia "Bihari"	Percentage
10-17 years	4th	5	4	16.36%
18- 35 years	3rd	6	4	18.18%
36- 55 years	2nd	7	6	23.64%
56- 65 years	1st	8	5	23.64%
Above than 65 years	1st	6	4	18.18%
Total		32	23	100%

These sections are based on socioeconomic and political experience, as well as their lifestyles. Some of the interviewees older than 65 have firsthand knowledge of the partition of British India and the Bangladeshi independence war. All informants between the ages of 56 and 65 have observed the Bangladeshi independence war. All members of these two age groups have lived in East Pakistan, and some informants have made extensive efforts to leave independent Bangladesh and move to Pakistan, and have maintained this long-held desire up until the most recent years. The majority of informants in the middle-aged group (36-55 years) are at least politically and psychologically distinct from their elders; despite having numerous allegations against independent Bangladesh, they are reluctant to bring up any Pakistan-related issues. Due to the efforts of this generation, "Bihari" people have been able to obtain Bangladeshi citizenship. As with non-camp-dwelling "Bihari" people, 18-35-year-old and 10-17-year-old camp-dwellers have nearly the same rights as other born-and-raised Bangladeshi nationals of the same socioeconomic standing; and their constant interaction with Bengalis is evident. Although practically all non-camp-dwelling informants, regardless of age, are accustomed to engaging with Bengalis, among camp-dwellers, middle-aged adults and children and adolescents are more advanced than others. So, overall, I have categorized "Biharis" above

55 as first generation, above 35 as second generation, above 18 as third generation, and below 18 as fourth generation.

In order to gather the necessary information, I have selected first a lower middle class, higher secondary pass, genuine "Bihari," and enthusiastic sixty-year-old Bangladeshi citizen, who has spontaneous access, regardless of camp or non-camp. Because purposive sampling based on heterogeneity opens up more dimensions of intensive study in qualitative fieldwork (Stake, 2005), after selecting ten additional area-based assistant informants through the key-informant of the research among the informants, with their help other informants were selected using purposive and chain referral sampling methods.

Selection of research methods

This study explores the lives of the Urdu-speaking diaspora living in Chittagong to unravel its diasporic dynamics based on anthropological investigation. Since the less organized nature of qualitative methods increases their applicability in diaspora studies (Amelina & Barglowski, 2019), informal interview, oral history, genealogical method, focus group discussion, and observation methods were employed according to the research objectives, range of field sites, and categories of informants.

In order to elucidate various facets of the diasporic transformation of the "Bihari" population, a variety of informal interviews conducted in accordance with a number of relevant checklists have proven to be an effective method for collecting the necessary data through gossiping and discussion. Twenty informal interviews were conducted in "Bihari" camp sites, while another fifteen were conducted outside of camps. The majority of data was acquired through informal face-to-face interviews during fieldwork.

Oral history method was extremely useful in this research to obtain historical information and study it from a variety of perspectives, the majority of which could not be found in written sources, which is unquestionably essential for understanding the diasporic transformation of the "Bihari" people. Six informants who directly participated in or saw the flow of events in this respect were interviewed here through informal in-depth interviews.

Genealogical method greatly assisted in comprehending the diaspora transition of "Bihari" people. Inspired by Gall (2009), I have used this method in my research "as a framework of analysis" to comprehend the personal narratives of the "Bihari" diaspora people according to their genealogy, and particularly in the analysis of contrasting issues such as endogamy and exogamy practices among "Bihari" diaspora people.

In this research, Focus Group Discussion (F.G.D.) was an appropriate method for gathering new information and cross-checking collected data from 7-9 informants in rapid succession. Using this method, it was also simple to gain access to informants' personal perspectives, which provided me with the opportunity to justify the validity of information in terms of group discussion by argument and counterargument, thereby reducing significant cycles of error and mistake.

Due to the application of both participant and non-participant observation methods based on situational demand and the informational involvement of different factors, motives, and trends in this research, the observation method is significantly more crucial than others. As there were numerous types of differences, such as age, sex, and status, among the informants, the observation method was useful for comparing their responses and filling in

numerous informational gaps. From the beginning to the end, continuous observation has enabled the justification and analysis of information to enrich it.

These research methods were chosen in accordance with research objectives and scopes, and after justifying their necessity and relevance to the research interests, they were modified slightly. Methods such as informal interview, oral history, focus group discussion, and observation were chosen at the outset. For the justification of the demand of this research to examine varied parameters associated across generations, genealogical method was added later, which gives this research new potential to explore the transgenerational angles in diasporic transition.

Conceptual analysis and theoretical approach

Migration-related anthropological research has been developing new theoretical perspectives while also significantly broadening the established ones. In particular, elements relating to "transnationalism" and "diaspora" have added additional dimensions to research from an analytical perspective on multifaceted identities from an anthropological standpoint (Clifford, 1994 and Rouse, 1995).

The diaspora is an always complex (Werbner, 2013) but unique Greek word that also encompasses the concept of 'dispersion,' 'distribution,' and 'diffusion' (Dufoix, 2018, p. 13). The Greek verb "speiro" (to sow) and the preposition "dia" (over) are the origins of the word "diaspora" (David & Muñoz-Basols, 2011). The etymological duality of the term diaspora refers to the dispersion of seeds. From one perspective, it represents opportunities for dispersal, and from another, it represents opportunities for new life (Sideri, 2008). As the term "diaspora" is related to the verbs "to scatter" and "to sow," according to Nasta (2002), both dispersal and settlement are relevant to "diaspora." Whether voluntarily or forcibly, diaspora people left their country of origin (Kottak, 2015; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007). Then, they achieve a recognized legal presence in another country, are able to maintain an inseparable bond among themselves, and continue to maintain ties with their actual or imagined homeland (Hanafi, 2005). Dufoix defines it as an "ethnic community separated by state borders" or "transnational community" (Dufoix, 2008, p. 30). Considering the multifaceted uses of diaspora, he compares it to Janus, the Roman god of "beginnings, transitions, and passages ("Janus," n.d.)," because by simultaneously looking to the past and the future, diaspora allows us to think of dispersion as a state of incompleteness or a state of completeness, while taking into account the question of origins. So, in general it can be said that diaspora refers to populations that are dispersed away from their homeland, do not assimilate themselves entirely within the present settlement, and attempt to reproduce a new social and cultural formation with a distinct identity that is tied to their origin or homeland.

The academic conceptualization of diaspora does not commence until the late 1970s. Prior to that, British cultural studies are developed by emphasizing identity issues in the middle of the 1970s, resulting in the new rendition of diaspora studies, embodied by British sociologists Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Hall (1990) analyzes identity as an ongoing process of unfinished "production," and cultural identity is a historical phenomenon that spans the past and future and transforms in each moment as a result of a continuing interplay between history, culture, and power. He emphasizes what constitutes a people's "becoming" and "being." According to him, from the perspective of the "developed" West, all natives in their colonies are essentially the same: "marginal," "underdeveloped," "periphery," and "other." Representation is a well-known Foucauldian term (Grohmann, 2021). Said (1979) demonstrates that how intentional representations are made. Then we see, Hall was influenced

by both Foucault and Said while examining the relationship between cultural identity and representation (Hall, 1990, pp. 225-226). He analyzes how the West so effectively exercises its power within its own categories of knowledge to construct the native people as different and the "other," such that the native people see and experience themselves as identical to it. Due to differences in economic, political, and cultural dependence, each sense of "otherness" is not equally associated with metropolitan centers. In the interim, cultural identities have been specifically and critically imprinted with this inevitable "difference." Due to the fact that the perimeters of these differences are continually positioned and repositioned from different vantage points, a "doubleness" of similarity and difference emerges. This distinction signifies something other than genuine "otherness." This study finds a similarity in the case of "stranded Pakistanis," who are primarily Bangladeshi camp-dwelling "Bihari." They are marginalized not only by mainstream society, but also by other "Biharis." As described by Ghosh (2008), the politics of "otherising" Muslims in colonial and post-colonial Bihar is therefore fundamentally linked to the marginalization of these "stranded Pakistanis" in Bangladesh, but the sense, type, and degree of "otherness" has also changed across place, time, and context. In fact, with the flip of reality, there is also a shift in identity.

Dufoix (2013) noted that Paul Gilroy, like Stuart Hall, believes that the implications of diasporic identity may not be stable or permanent. To analyze diasporic identity, according to Gilroy (1993), it is necessary to examine the organizational structures, cultural politics, and political cultures developed by diaspora populations through political engagement. According to Hall (1990), diaspora cannot be defined without conceptualizing such fundamental heterogeneity and diversity. Diasporic identities are constructed through transformation, difference, and hybridization (Hall, 1999/2019, pp. 223-224). Mr. Ashrafi, a 72-year-old Urdu-speaking leader from Halishahar Bihari Colony, believes that whether they are referred to as "Muhajir" or "stranded Pakistanis," the identities of the "Bihari" population of Bangladesh are constructed and reconstructed through various types of representational politics, as is the case with all other diasporas in the world. According to Gilroy (1991), diasporic peoples are more connected to where they are than to where they came from. As victims of communal riots and eviction prior to and after the partition of British India in 1947, "Bihari" peoples from India sought refuge in Bangladesh. Over time, they became dispersed and continue to struggle for full citizenship rights. In most cases, they were unable to maintain contact with the country they left behind. Even as a residence, the land's existence in their collective memory is questionable.

Existing literatures barely emphasize some crucial issues. The most important of these are the origin, nature, aspects, and dimensions of the "Bihari" minority's diaspora. This study found that most of the available literature only focuses on the miserable existence of refugees in the camps, but almost nothing outside the camps. However, according to Muktar, 61, a resident of Bihari camp in Jhawtala, and Sohel, 82, a resident of Khulshi Bihari colony, the world outside the camp is by no means isolated from the camps. Rather, external interference in the Bihari camps or the relationship between Urdu-speaking and Bengali people outside the camps constantly affects the entire diaspora. Hence the hope of focusing contemporary issues like diasporic dynamics in these literatures has proved to be delusional. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the diasporic dynamics of the "Bihari" population of Chittagong. This study will help fill this gap.

Diaspora identity

Analytical studies of diaspora have been dominated by conceptualizations based on characteristics from the very beginning. By specifying characteristics, scholars compel individuals to reconsider diaspora-related issues.

The key characteristics and typology

Compiling the distinguishing characteristics of diaspora described by Safran (1991), Cohen (2008), Brubaker (2005), Butler (2001), Ahmed (2000), and Sheffer (2003) yields several key characteristics, such as historical background, involvement through generations, bonding with homeland, homeland-oriented expectations and commitments, the background to the formation of a diaspora, diasporic awareness, boundary maintenance, and solidarity. Safran identifies the Jewish Diaspora as the "ideal type" in terms of defining characteristics, and he identifies the Armenian, Maghrebi, Palestinian, Cuban, Greek, Chinese, and Polish cases as legitimate diasporas (King & Christou, 2009). Cohen (2008) adds a further five-fold typology of diaspora, broadening its definition and incorporating its historical process. According to him, Jews, Africans, and Armenians are ideally victim diaspora; indentured Indians are labor diaspora or "proletarian diaspora;" British people are imperial, "settler," or "colonial" diaspora; Lebanese and Chinese diaspora are trade diaspora; and Caribbean, Sindhi, and Parsi diaspora are deterritorialized diaspora. He also considered the Irish and Palestinians to be victim diaspora; the Chinese, Japanese, Turks, Italians, and North Africans to be labor diaspora; the Russians and other colonial powers to be imperial diaspora; the Venetians, business and professional Indians, and the Japanese to be trade diaspora; and the Roma, Muslims, and other religious diasporas to be deterritorialized diaspora. Due to the fact that a single diaspora may fit under multiple types, King and Christou (2009) argue that this typology is distinct but not unique; for example, the Greek diaspora may be classified as imperial, trade, or labor diaspora. Clifford (1994) believes that it would be more appropriate to consider the diaspora's borders rather than its essential characteristics. According to Clifford (1994), the context of time difference and historical position can either increase or decrease diasporism in societies. Applying the "ideal type" approach, he deems it necessary to exercise caution when developing a working definition of diaspora. As the most applicable method, he suggests tracking the polythetic arena of contemporary diasporic forms rather than monitoring it. In locating and defining diaspora contrary to the norms of nation-states and indigenous assertions of "tribal" peoples, he suggests identifying the discursive field as an alternative approach. He believes that the historical origin of diaspora people is distinct from that of "immigrants" due to the fact that the majority of diasporic populations are uprooted and subject to prejudice, and their sense of identity could shed light on that. Further, he described the formation of diaspora-constructed nation-states like Israel as rare occurrences of "homecomings," which is a denial of diasporic status according to the definition of diaspora. Nonetheless, despite the fact that different scholars have analyzed diaspora characteristically or typologically from different perspectives, these analyses unquestionably contribute to the identification of a population as a diaspora. Due to differences in time, history, and context, it is obviously impossible for every feature to be appropriate for all diasporas. Academics have ruled out the possibility of universal acceptance of every characteristic for every diaspora.

"Biharis" in Bangladesh

The identities of "Bihari" individuals in Bangladesh have developed in various ways over time. On the basis of linguistic identity between Bengalis and Urdu-speakers, the then-government of Pakistan created negative social divisions against Bengalis after 1947.

The Bengali masses quickly realized this and erupted in protest; in 1952, the heroic Bengalis seized victory at the cost of their own lives by agitating for their mother tongue. In the 1971 Bangladeshi independence war, a large portion of the Urdu-speaking population was directly involved in the Pakistani aggressors' brutal genocide and horrific rape of unarmed Bengalis. Taking advantage of the "Bihari"-Bengali division created by the Pakistani government, they supported the Pakistani aggressors against the Bengalis. Thus, their permanent racial separation from the Bengali majority population became inevitable. Consequently, their socioeconomic and political standing in independent Bangladesh began to deteriorate, and their identity also underwent various changes from generation to generation. Prior to 1971, these refugees from the 1947 partition were known as "Muhajir." Later, they were referred to as "stranded Pakistanis," "stranded non-Bengalis," "Biharis," "non-locals," and "non-vernaculars" (Siddiqi, 2013; Kuczkiewicz-Fraś, 2019; Redclift, 2010a, 2010b, 2016; Kelley, 2010; UNHCR, 2009; Tillott, 2016; Alexander, Chatterji & Jalais, 2016; and Begum, 2012). Many second-generation Urdu speakers, like Kamran, 43, a resident of Ferozshah Bihari Camp, and Roohina, 54, a resident of Halishahar Bihari Colony, believe that the acquisition of Bangladeshi citizenship by Urdu speakers in 2008 was not a sudden event. Rather, it is the result of the struggle of the second generation of Urdu speakers, which has brought about epochal changes in the entire diaspora. These terms not only identify them, but also highlight their diasporic identity's background. Every angle of identity transformation reveals one of their life's transitional phases. Then, on the day that their most desired land, Pakistan, refuses to accept them, the unpredictability of their fate brings them to the verge of utter humiliation. According to the "Bihari" people of Chittagong, when the Pakistani forces were forced to leave the war-torn independent Chittagong like "cowards," with the false promise of being taken to Pakistan in a few days, they made the last "gaddari"[2] with the Urdu-speaking people, and fled leaving them completely "lawaris."[3]

Table 2: Shifting identities of the Urdu- speaking community

Years	Identity or Callings	Territories/ Countries
Before 1946	Indian Muslim	Various Indian states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab
After 1946-1947	Refugees/ Muhajir	Pakistan/ Bangladesh
After 1971	Stranded-Pakistanis/ Stranded non-Bengalis/ Non-Bengalis/ "Biharis"/ Non-locals/ Non-vernacular/ Urdu-speaking people	Pakistan/ Bangladesh
After 2008	"Bihari"/ Urdu-speaking people (Bangladeshi)	Bangladesh

Biharis in Chittagong

Recalling the partition of India in 1947, 85-year-old Jannat of Ferozshah Bihari colony and 90-year-old Ahmed of Hamjarbag Bihari camp said that communal riots and anti-Muslim

[2] An Urdu word meaning betrayal in English.
[3] An Urdu word meaning abandoned in English.

sentiments forced the ancestors of the Urdu-speaking people of Chittagong to leave their ancestral homeland in India. They arrived in Chittagong after crossing the then-India-East Pakistan border regions. Since then, a minimum of four generations have resided in Chittagong. Initially, they were unable to maintain any contact with their relatives in their "former homeland" of India, but now a significant number of them are at least connected via mobile internet. Some have visited the former homeland, or are awaiting the opportunity to do so, while others have died with the regret of never having seen it again. But despite their desire to revisit the former homeland, I never encountered anyone who desired a permanent return. Historically, the majority of them considered Pakistan to be their homeland and attempted to return there; however, there are currently no members of this group other than a handful of elderly people. Even for a few of these elders, the thought of traveling to Pakistan has become a nightmare. However, at the instigation of Pakistan, they did not hesitate to murder and raped Bengalis; after being rejected by Pakistan, they are trapped in independent Bangladesh. Consequently, this study found that the new group identities of Urdu-speaking people represent them both inside and outside the camp, and their own diaspora has been formed on the basis of their linguistic solidarity.

Distinct sectarian identity and social strata

This study found that Sunni and Shia people make up the majority of the "Bihari" population in Chittagong. Despite the fact that both parties claim to be Muslims, it does not appear that they recognize each other as Muslims. Their relationship is not harmonious, but rather strained. Shormin, 40, a resident of Raufabad Bihari camp, and Hasan, 58, a resident of Shershah Bihari colony, even consider eating together or sharing food to be inappropriate. However, the issue of strained relations between Sunni and Shia people is not unique to this country or to those who speak Urdu. The Sunni Urdu-speaking community of Chittagong found in this research includes camp-dwellers, field camp-dwellers, and "Bihari" colony-dwellers. Among them "Bihari" camp-dwellers reside in the lowest socioeconomic stratum; field camp-dwellers are one stratum above them; and "Bihari" colony-dwellers are the most prestigious of these three classes.

Figure 2: In some instances, even in broad daylight, the entrance's darkness appears to represent the social strata of the "Bihari" camp dwellers.

The social status of colony residents who own their homes is found higher in this study than that of colony residents who rent their homes. Included in the population of Bihari-Bengali blended areas are Urdu-speaking individuals who reside in either their own or rented homes. As residents of a more open social environment, blended areas have more amenities and a higher socioeconomic status than those in Urdu-speaking areas; homeowners are privileged

among them. Those who reside in rented dwellings in blended areas due to the loss of home ownership have a higher status than other residents of rented dwellings, with "Bihari" camp escapees occupying the lowest strata. The fieldwork of this study shows that their social stratification is primarily determined by their place of residence, not by their occupation.

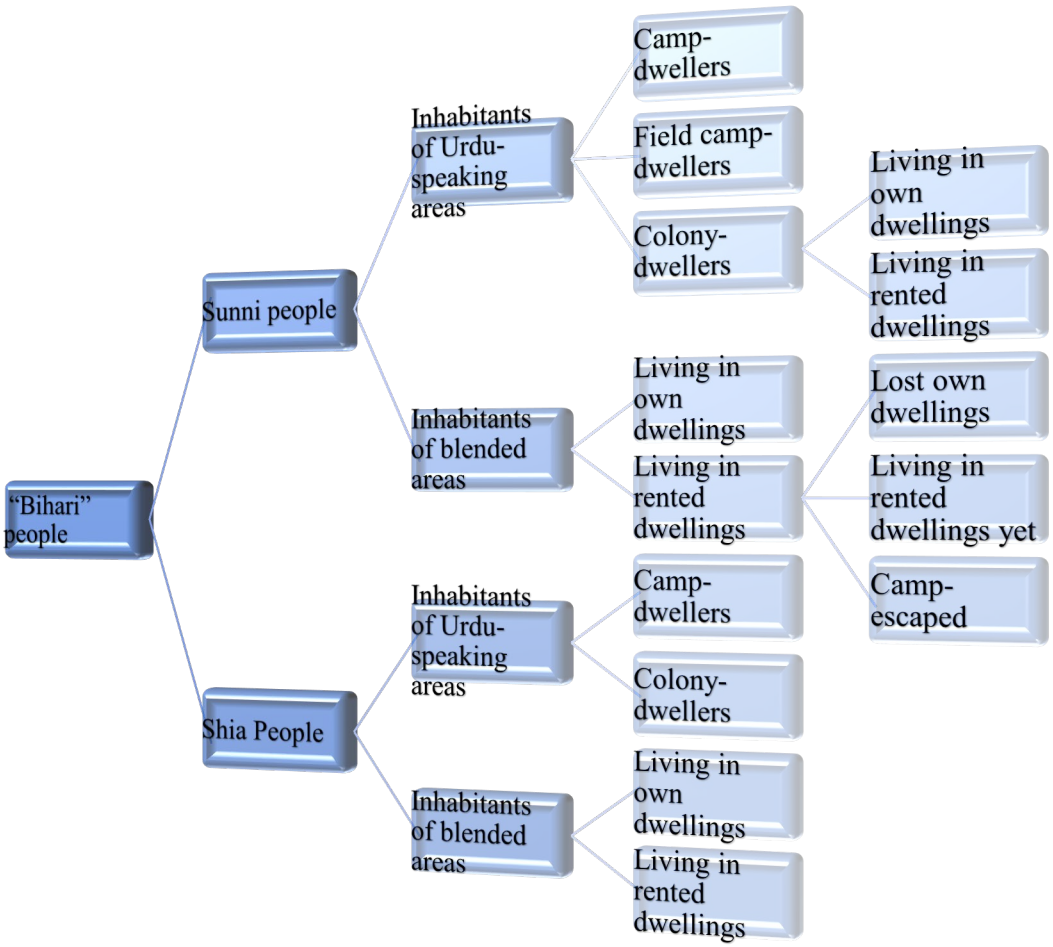

Figure 3: Residence based social stratification of "Bihari" people in Chittagong

The Shias in Urdu-speaking areas found in this study are divided into two common strata, camp-dwellers and colony-dwellers, while Shia residents of Bihari-Bengali blended areas are divided into residents of their own homes and residents of rented homes. Similar to "Bihari" Sunnis, Shia camp dwellers are also confined to the lowest social strata. Its upper strata are composed sequentially of "Bihari" colony-dwellers, then residents of rented

dwellings in blended areas, and finally residents of their own homes. This study found that the Shia community is also stratified based on their place of residence.

In terms of diasporism, neither the Sunni or Shia "Bihari" community is observed as parallel in this study to its own social stratification. Camp-dwellers have the most diasporic features among the Sunni "Bihari" population. Then there are field camp-dwellers, colony-dwellers, inhabitants of own dwellings of Bihari-Bengali blended areas, and finally there are inhabitants of rented dwellings of blended areas. In terms of diasporism, camp-dwellers and those living in rented dwellings in blended areas are living on two different ends as less connected social strata. While those who are living in rented dwellings in blended areas are the least diasporic, this study revealed their social status as a superior stratum within the "Bihari" community. On the other hand, this study found that the most diasporic are camp-dwellers, who are the most deprived and living in the lowest social strata. The fact of having more or less diasporism is not optional or stagnant; rather, it often shows upward dynamics depending on the availability of facilities. Similarly, higher education has become a silent tool of upward dynamics for camp dwellers in social stratification, especially observed in the "Bihari" camps of Halishahar and Raufabad in Chittagong. There are even peoples from third generation, like Farhad and Naj, who are becoming inhabitants of rented dwellings or who own dwellings in Bihari-Bengali blended areas after leaving the camps of Jhawtala and Ferozeshah, but who denied that in their genealogical information. On the other hand, the first-generation members of their own families admit that in their life history. Some people from the blended areas, such as 28-year-old Tazmeen, have tried to erase their own identity as "Bihari" in informal interviews.

Figure 4: Some narrow camp-dwellings are mainly loaded with the books of formal education of third and fourth generation of the "Bihari" diaspora.

This study found that those Shia "Bihari" people who are living in their own dwellings have the most diasporism. Then, colony-dwellers, camp-dwellers, and those living in rented dwellings are serially found. Inhabitants of rented dwellings in blended areas have the lowest diasporism in both Sunni and Shia "Bihari" communities. The tendency to hide or deny one's own identity of this social strata has been most pronounced among the Shia population. Many Shias, such as Baqir, an 87-year-old Shia Muslim resident of Sadarghat Bihari-Bengali blended area, believe that the reason behind this is the "insecurity due to religious identity" of the Shia community. On the other hand, many Sunnis, like Hiba, a 78-year-old Sunni Muslim resident of Jhawtala Field Camp, have blamed their "social insecurity" for this. Both of them are found, in this research, to belong to the same middle class economically. According to a close observation of this study, this issue is more or less related to the opportunistic attitude and mental insecurity of the educated middle class as a declining social class in developing countries.

Trajectories of inferiority to denial

This study found evidence that "Bihari" people have been able to preserve their identity despite extensive interaction with the majority of Bangladeshi society. According to 15-year-old Rehan, a resident of the Jhautala Bihari camp, and 22-year-old Ali, an Urdu-speaking resident of the Bihari-Bengali blended area of Sadarghat, the free access of Indian culture through dish antennas has facilitated their cultural practice. Especially third and fourth generation "Biharis" like Maham, Nafia, and Afraz living in Halishahar, Raufabad, and Hamjarbag camp areas claim that their Bengali speaking friends are eager to interact with them, and, due to their mutual friendship and liberal socialization, they even attempt to practice spoken Hindi for fraternal communication. However, camp dwellers like 38-year-old Zubayer of Halishahar Bihari camp, are plagued by inferiority complex because, similar to the Bengalis, the "Biharis" outside the camp also wish to avoid them. Due to the increased interaction and kinship between non-camp-dwelling "Biharis" and Bengalis in the blended areas, transactions between the two cultures have become easier. In the case of the next generation of mixed marriages living outside the Bihari camps, like Abdullah, a 60-year-old Bengali father, and Jamila, a 51-year-old Bihari mother, residing in the Bengali-Bihari blended area of Khulshi, the sons of "Bihari" mothers are particularly keen to marry "Bihari" women. Similarly, 28-year-old Umair, the son of another Bihari mother and Bengali father from the Bihari-Bengali blended area of Shershah, is already married to a Bihari woman. On the other hand, women like Kamrun, a 30-year-old resident of Jhawtala Field Camp, who are the next generation of Bengali fathers and "Bihari" mothers, prefer Bengali men when it comes to marriage. However, the predominance of "Biharis" within the camp is readily apparent. Even if to a lesser extent, Urdu-speakers in the larger Bangladeshi community suffer from inferiority complexes due to their identities. Their historical legacy is tainted by the brutal aggression of their ancestors against the Bengalis during the Bangladeshi independence war. They are also rejected by Pakistan, their expected homeland. Regardless of the reason, the majority of them are still dissatisfied with their ethnic future, which motivates Nazaam, Mir, Sabrina, and other "Bihari" individuals of the second, third, and fourth generation to deny their identities. The pragmatic relationship between this denial and diasporism simultaneously pulls them in opposite directions. Whether this is due to the familiarity of the group, where they had little opportunity to deny it, or to something else is debatable. However, this study closely observed that the tendency of Sunni "Bihari" people in Chittagong to deny their "Bihari" identity is greater than in Dhaka, Khulna, and Jessore. But whether in Chittagong or elsewhere, camp-dwellers have their own signboards, which are purposefully removed or improperly displayed.

Figure 5 (i & ii): As the signboards of the camp-buildings have been removed over time, it is difficult to locate them without the help of the address given on the signboards of the adjoining shops.

Figure 6 (i & ii): The signboard of the second photo was backward turned, as shown in the first photo, which might be done intentionally to hide their identity.

Significantly, in terms of identity denial, when compared to Sunni "Biharis," Shia people not only attempt to conceal their identity as "Biharis," but this study found that they also have a strong tendency to conceal their identity as Shias. Shias like Qasim, 37, a resident of the Bihari-Bengali blended area of Sadarghat, outside their Shia circle in Chittagong, are reticent about their religious identity and identify themselves as Sunni Muslims. However, this study found the inner entrances of Shia people residing in their own homes in Chittagong typically reflect an Iranian-influenced religious identity. Although the rate of identity denial is low among Shias living in their own homes in Chittagong, it is extremely high among Shias from other social classes. This rate is especially high among Shias like Murtaza, 57, a resident of the Bihari-Bengali blended area of Halishahar, who live in rented houses. However, they have all admitted that they never identify as Shia outside of their local area, religious environment, or close circle. Outside of Chittagong, according to Ruqayyah, a 43-year-old Shia Bihari from Jessore, and Ibrahim, a 55-year-old Shia Bihari from Khulna, particularly in Khulna and Jessore, Shia "Bihari" Muslims prefer to publicly reveal their Shia identity by hiding or rejecting their "Bihari" identity. This study found that although all Bangladeshi "Biharis" reside in the same nation, it is not uncommon for their diasporism to vary as the dimensions of their diasporic identity vary from region to region.

Figure 7: The inner entrance to a Shia home usually represents their religious identity influenced by Iranian ideology.

Conclusion

As Hall (1990) analyzed the dependence of constant construction and reconstruction of every identity on the specific place and time as well as on the historical and cultural position of the representator within each representation, the "Bihari" diaspora were identified as "Muhajir" prior to 1971, and subsequently as "stranded-Pakistanis," "stranded non-Bengalis," "non-Bengalis," "Biharis," "non-locals," "non-vernacular," etc. (Siddiqi, 2013; Kuczkiewicz-Fraś, 2019; Redclift, 2010a, 2010b, 2016; Kelley, 2010; UNHCR, 2009; Tillott, 2016; Alexander, Chatterji & Jalais, 2016; and Begum, 2012). These transformations of the identity of "Bihari" diaspora residing in Bangladesh highlight the transitional periods of their diasporic background. These are also participating in the ongoing interplay between history, culture, and power identified by Hall (1990). The entire process dominates the unfinished "production" of identity as a historical matter. As a distinct diaspora, the "Bihari" people of Bangladesh have their own historical background, intergenerational involvement, boundary maintenance, feelings of solidarity, and consciousness. According to Cohen's (2008) five-fold typology of diaspora, they can be classified as "victim diaspora."

Despite the fact that the "Bihari" diaspora of Chittagong is primarily composed of Sunni and Shia Muslims, they avoid each other and do not recognize "the other" as an authentic Muslim. However, the social stratification of both is primarily based on current residence, not occupation. Residents of the Sunni "Bihari" settlements in Chittagong are categorized as camp-dwellers, field-camp-dwellers, and colony-dwellers, while the Shia population of Urdu-speaking regions is divided into camp-dwellers and colony-dwellers. Sunni and Shia inhabitants of Bihari- Bengali blended areas are stratified according to whether they own or rent their homes. Sunni and Shia camp dwellers are relegated to the lowest social class. Diasporism in "Bihari" Sunni and Shia communities are not parallel to their own social stratification. Among Sunni "Biharis," camp-dwellers are the most diasporic, whereas among Shia, homeowners are the most diasporic. However, diasporism frequently exhibits an upward trend dependent on a few factors such as higher education, income growth, and citizenship facilities, among others. Dish antennas have made it easier for at least the third and fourth generation of "Bihari" diaspora in Bangladesh to practice their own culture by providing free access to Indian culture. According to some of them, their Bengali friends attempt to practice oral Urdu/Hindi with them in order to communicate with this flow. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that in the greater Bangladeshi reality, burdened by the brutal aggression of the Urdu-speaking ancestors against the Bengalis during the Bangladesh War of Independence, "Bihari" people suffer from an inferiority complex regarding their own identities, and many continue to despair of their ethnic future. Thus, their second, third, and fourth generations are

motivated to conceal their identities. The camp dwellers, who are surrounded by Urdu- and Bengali-speaking people, suffer the most from inferiority complex. Sunni "Biharis" in Chittagong are more likely to deny their identity as Urdu speakers than those in Dhaka, Khulna, or Jessore. In each instance, camp-dwellers have a propensity to remove their own signboards. However, the Shia population of Chittagong has a strong propensity to conceal both their "Bihari" and Shia identities, identifying themselves as Sunnis outside of their own region, religious environment, or social circle. However, particularly in Khulna and Jessore, Shia Urdu-speaking Muslims reveal their Shia identity, when necessary, but deny their "Bihari" identity. Sunni or Shia, the diasporic tendencies of the "Bihari" diaspora of Chittagong differ from those of other regions.

Sen (2021) asserts that the poor were the primary victims of the horrifying and unprecedented sectarian riots in India in the 1940s, which were sparked by the politics of division. A portion of these destitute refugees who were expelled from India have been living in camps in Bangladesh for generations and speak Urdu. But the characteristics of camp-dwellers in large cities like Dhaka or Chittagong go beyond that. Renting a little space in the "Bihari" camp in Chittagong, poor "Biharis" who weren't previously in the camp are also moving there recently. Even "Bihari" individuals who were previously low-income camp residents are now moving up the social scale by renting or selling their camp homes, moving into mixed-income communities, and generally improving their socioeconomic standing. Even coopted Bengalis in "Bihari" families and Bengali families living in the camp as underprivileged tenants are there. The "Bihari" authorities who want to rule the camp do not now reside there; instead, they are represented through representatives who aim to dominate the "others" there. These "others" all share the trait of being poor Bangladeshis who live in camps to save money on their low-cost living expenditures, including some Bengali families with "Bihari" families. These camps have come to represent all persecuted poor people. In reality, urban Bangladeshi impoverished Urdu-speaking and Bengalis—camp residents or not—are trapped in the same socioeconomic strata in terms of living standards (Hassan, 2021). At the same time, though known throughout the country as "Biharis" till today, most of them are now citizens of Bangladesh, hence they are an integral part of Bangladesh. In this context, in-depth research to explore the multidimensional dynamics of the "Bihari" diaspora is certainly the need of the hour.

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