

# **Food, culture and identity in the Bangladeshi Diaspora**

**SURJYA KANTA BHATTACHARJEE**

**Student ID No- 12909338**

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Supervised by:

Dr David Garbin

Lecturer in Sociology

School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research

University of Kent

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## Abstract

A careful look at the UK population reflects the elevated position, growing population of some diaspora groups. Existing research shows the complex nature of diaspora groups and underlines the difficulties for sociologists in understanding the various cultural aspects of these varied groups. Hence, it became crucial to study these groups in order to update the existing literatures as most of the existing literatures do not fulfil the required attention towards diaspora groups. Although scholars started comprehending 'diaspora' in their studies since the 1970s, majority of the works remained focused on the classical Jewish diaspora and their characteristics of forceful removals, exile, nostalgia and hope of final return to homeland. Again some of the studies were carried out on African diaspora, but the result remained limited as these studies were more focused with the issues around identity. Following the trend of classical diaspora, a new version of 'diaspora' has arrived, which included new groups of people e.g.: businessmen, politicians, scholars and journalists. The emergence of a new diaspora group has challenged the classical form of diaspora through its positive meaning of life opposing the classical theme of survival in agony. So this research will explore the cultural aspects of a relatively new diaspora group with particular reference to the Bangladeshi communities in the UK. Along with that the study will explore the food consumption patterns of this given community. By doing so, it will also identify the relationship between food and identity. As the study will focus on the interest, beliefs and cultural practices of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK, a qualitative research approach is used. In conclusion, the study is expected to uncover the underlying significance of culture and identity on food consumption of diaspora.

## **Introduction**

This research explores the relationship between food culture and identity through an analysis of the food consumption of Bangladeshi diaspora. The classical meaning of diaspora was only confined to the experiences of dispersed Jewish, Armenian, African and Greek communities. Additionally, a ‘traumatic experience’ or ‘forceful removal’ was conceded as the reason for the displacements of these communities. However, towards the end of the last century, the study of diaspora has passed through number of phases (Cohen, 2008). ‘Diaspora culture’ has become the new phenomenon to diaspora studies. In fact diaspora culture has treated as the gateway of diaspora studies. Moreover, studies on diaspora culture also provide “significant frameworks for understanding the dynamics of international migration” (Pasura, 2012:143). New groups of expatriates, traders, immigrants and ethnic minorities came under the diasporic umbrella because they showed similar characteristics to the classical diaspora. Although there are number of debates around the new types of diaspora (Cohen, 2008), a common thread can be identified between these groups that binds them together. This common thread, described as ‘de-territorialisation’, refers to the people living within particular diasporas outside their homeland.

This proposed study aims to explore the food consumption patterns of Bangladeshi communities in the UK and in particular, to assess the relationship between food and identity within their diaspora. The Bangladeshi diaspora are on the one hand uniquely positioned in the influence they enjoy within the multicultural environment in the UK. However, on the other hand, they appear to have little studied. If the reasons for this lack of prominence can be better understood, and then there may be significant opportunities for sociologists to understand this particular diaspora.

The objectives of the research are:

- To explore the food consumption patterns of Bangladeshi communities in the UK
- To identify the role of culture in food consumption patterns within the family and social structure.
- To identify the relationship between food practice and identity within this particular diaspora.

### **Research Outline:**

The whole research is structured through five subsequent chapters. A number of themes including diaspora, Bangladeshi diaspora, diaspora culture, food practice and identity will run through those chapters. As a whole those concepts will connect the research together.

In chapter one, the study will discover every aspect of diaspora studies including the emergence of Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK. By analysing the history, its presence and demographic data, this chapter will justify the need to study Bangladeshi diaspora from sociological aspect.

Chapter two will analyse the existing diaspora studies literature and will produce a comprehensive body of work including arguments, agreements and disagreements within the diaspora literature. It will also allow creating a framework and methodology to fulfil the research objectives.

Based on the arguments in existing literatures, research methodology will be discussed in chapter three by giving arguments in favouring the methods used in the study. Subsequently, it will examine and justify the use of qualitative research method in studying food, culture and identity of a given society. In this chapter, research questions, process of recruitment and research process will be explained.

Following research methodology, chapter four will elaborate the findings of the study. It will analyse the finding from theoretical and sociological perspective. Through the analysis process, the research will demonstrate the importance of diaspora studies in particular to it culture, food and identity.

Finally, chapter five will follow with conclusions along with some recommendations. It will provide a new insight into Bangladeshi as well as all diaspora groups, which should help scholars to come forward with new attitude to look into diaspora from a different angle.

## Chapter1: Background of the research

The presence of diaspora has increased all over the world, especially in European countries along with USA and Middle East and there is no significant sign of decreasing the number in recent future. Moreover, changed attitude, political awareness and multiculturalism within the host country persuaded the increasing number of emerging diaspora communities (Sheffer, 1986). Hence, studies on diasporic culture have become areas of interest among the scholars. There are number of approaches to explore the recent field of diasporic studies.

The presence of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK was the result of British imperial power in the Indian subcontinent (Gardner, 1995). A number of Sylheti (north-eastern Bangladesh) men worked as *lascars* (seamen) in East India Company ships (Gardner, 1993). After World War Two, with industrial growth in the UK, a large number of seamen found themselves occupying various industrial positions (Ballard, 1994). Initially, food products, such as chicken and mutton became the most consumed items, as it was difficult at the time to find traditional Bangladeshi foods in the UK (Gardner, 1993). So the scarcity of traditional Bangladeshi food and ingredients forced the community to import food and special spices from Bangladesh. Moreover, because of changes in the pattern of immigration in early 1970s, male migrants started to bring their families and children and eventually became permanent settlers. As a result of family reunions, by the mid 1980's, the number of Bangladeshi immigrants reached 100,000 (Gardner, 2002). This influx of Bangladeshi immigrants changed the social dimension of the community, in turn producing noticeable changes in food consumption patterns. The resulting high demand for traditional Bangladeshi food and spices in the UK not only created opportunities to develop ethnic entrepreneurship among the Bangladeshi diaspora. At the same time, because of the decline of the textile industry in the UK in the mid 1980's, most members of the Bangladeshi community entered into the restaurant trade (Gardner, 2002). Hence, food became an inevitable part of their households and private lives.

According to the Census 2011, the Bangladeshi population has increased by 69 percent over the last ten years, constituting 451,529 compared to 283,063 in the Census 2001. Nearly 45 percent (222,127) of the current Bangladeshi population live

in London, representing nearly 3 percent of the city's population. Most of them live in London's Borough of Tower Hamlets and Newham and constitute 32 percent and 12 percent of these Borough populations respectively. The presence of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London is not only significant because of its size but also for its influence on local business, education, social and political affairs. Since the Bangladeshi diaspora is part of the South Asian in general, the proposed research could also provide insights on the food culture within this region.

Identifying the relation between food and identity among the Bangladeshi Diasporas will be one of the major objectives of this study. Hence it is critical to understand the culture, food and other social attributes, which the community belonged to before they migrated to the UK. It may assume that we will observe some changes in family and social culture within the same population here in the UK because of the impact of host culture (Burton, 1996). It is very much conceivable that some food consumption habits and sense of identity exhibited by the member of a diaspora group is more ingrained in the group's culture and is therefore, less likely to change, regardless of the extent and duration of his/her contacts with the indigenous population. In contrast, other cultural behaviour is more amenable to acculturative pressures, and assimilation may occur as a result of continuous contacts with the mainstream group. As there are some differences already evident amongst the population of Bangladesh (rural and urban), it is expected to observe a difference in the level of acculturation amongst the migrant population here in the UK. For example, Lee and Tse (1994) found that immigrants' duration of residence in Canada had significant effects on activities that had no substantial conflict with his/her culture of origin. On the other hand, duration of residence has little affect on activities that are highly relevant on his/her culture of origin, for instance celebrating ethnic festivals.

Bangladesh was not known to World as a separate political entity until it became independent in 1971. The region was known as *Bengal* (Bangla) during the British period and previously Indian empires. During that period, Hindu educationalists and professionals have dominated Bengal. They have owned more than 80 per cent of the urban and rural establishments. Hindu educationalists and *Jaminders* (landlords) established a number of institutions to expand education and

mostly Hindu men and women were the first pupils in those institutions. Various places and educational institutions are still carrying the evidence of those establishments across the country. But after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, the demographic of Bengal has changed and it became part of Pakistan and known as East Pakistan. As the partition of 1947 created a feeling among Hindu populations that *Hindustan* (India) should be their land, most of them left East Pakistan and migrated to West Bengal (western part of India). After this big flight of Hindus to West Bengal, Muslims took over the political and economic control of East Pakistan. But soon, West Pakistani based elite favoured by the government of Pakistan squeezed those opportunities. People of East Pakistan became oppressed by the activities of Pakistan government, which resulted several political and economic upset until 1971. In 1971 people of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) involved in war with West Pakistan militants and got independence after nine months of blood-spattered war.

A new social system has created after the independence of Bangladesh, which has more likely to start after the migrations of Hindus to Kolkata after the separation in 1947. A new elite society was created backed by political contacts, party affiliation and most importantly revolutionary service. The role of middle class stayed inadequate in social and political sectors. Similarly, in the villages some advantage-taking people took socio-political control with the help of new elite class replacing Hindu Jaminders (wealthy landlord).

In Bangladesh, food consumption pattern varies among the rural and urban populations. In urban areas meals are taken usually two times a day with a breakfast in the morning while having three meals is a very common practice among the rural populations. But in both cases, rice is heavily consumed as a source of carbohydrate. In average, rice is consumed at least twice a day. In rural areas, where people are mostly poor have rice three times a day. They mostly consume seasonal vegetables, *dahl* (lentils) and dried fish in their everyday meal. For the breakfast *roti* (bread made of flour) or *paratha* (roti fried in oil) is one of the common item consumed by the urban populations. Again seasonal vegetables, lentils and *halwa* (kind of traditional sweet) are consumed with breakfast. Beside rice, one of the most commonly consumed food items is fish because of its wide availability throughout the year.

Bangladesh is known as land of rivers, which are the source of variety of fish. Sea fish are also available in southern areas of Bangladesh although they are not widely consumed with some exceptions. Among meat items, mutton, goat and beef are most popular and widely consumed. Recent scarcity of those red meats and because of their high price, chicken, which is comparatively cheaper, is widely used to fulfil people's appetite for meat. A varied range of spices e.g.: ginger, cumin, coriander, turmeric, chilli, bay leaves, garlic are used in everyday cooking. Soya bean or mustard oil is used as cooking oil and most of the foods cooked are full of spices and oily. In some cases raw mustard oil consumed with smashed potato's (*bhorta*) and with salad (mix cucumber, onion and tomatos). Having desserts after a meal is not a common practice among Bangladeshi people although during special occasions e.g.: weddings, religious celebration desserts always served to invited peoples. Among available desserts, sweet yogurt, rice pudding and rasmalai are most commonly served. There are many seasonal fruits; jackfruits, mangos, bananas, lychees, papayas and pineapple are available throughout the year. Special foods e.g.: *biriyani* (aromatic rice and meat together), pilau rice and *roast chicken* (chicken marinated and cooked with special mix of spices) are also cooked and consumed in special occasions, which also reflect social class and status within the society.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1. Introduction

The term 'diaspora' has very limited use in early sociological and anthropological literatures. Moreover, the notion of diaspora lacks theoretical and conceptual clarity, which was recognised by many scholars (Paura, 2012). Early diaspora literatures were only confined to the definition of diaspora. Again those definitions were reflections of the characteristics of Jewish diaspora. Obviously over the last two decades there are number of debates over the definition of diaspora. Safran's (1991) definition of diaspora classified diaspora into three group: diaspora, semi-diaspora and non-diaspora, which includes the characteristics: dispersal to one or more foreign land, retention of collective memory, inability of fully assimilation, maintaining relationship with homeland in several ways, hoping for the prosperity of homeland and hope of final return to home land. Following Safran's typology, Cohen (1997) classified diaspora into five different groups: victim, labour, trade, cultural and imperial. Both Safran and Cohen's classification was based on the characteristics of diaspora and both of them have given importance on cultural features exhibited by various diaspora groups. Later on Sheffer (2003) classified diaspora based on historical phases: classical, modern and incipient, which has been supported by Reis (2004) where he mentioned the last typology as contemporary diaspora. In his typology, Reis also used historical time frame where Classical diaspora belongs to the time of ancient and Greek imperial power. Colonisation and the time of slavery were associated with modern diaspora and finally, post world war two was the starting of contemporary diaspora. In his typology, Reis also manifested that reason behind the formations of contemporary diaspora was not as same as classical diaspora. Economic stability and opportunity of secured and better life has mostly influenced the movement of contemporary diaspora.

The research will explore the relation between food and identity in referece with Bangladeshi communities. So to maintain a simple approach, this literature review will be focusing on some of the key themes: 'migration, diaspora and identity', 'food, diaspora and identity' and 'food, identity and Bangladeshi diaspora' along with

some other aspects of food and diaspora including transnationalism, memory and nostalgia, rituals and celebrations and role of gender.

## **2.2. Migration, diaspora and identity**

Although Safran (2005: 37), clearly mentioned diaspora as a ‘product of migration’, a number of characteristics was identified to fulfil to classify as diaspora. Living in a foreign land, keeping relations with Homeland, desire to keep distinct identity within the host society and a hope of return to the land of origin are the most common features of diaspora (Safran, 2007). Along with that, emotional, physical and a transnational relation or inter-relation has been identified as the threads for constructing diasporic communities (Safran, 1991; Sheffer, 1986). Again some new features e.g.: ‘groups that dispersed for colonial or voluntarist reasons’ have been added to the prototype of classical Jewish diaspora (Cohen, 2008: 6). Although all diaspora groups exhibit some of the above-mentioned features, Cohen (2008) mentioned about four types of diaspora: classical, victim, labour and imperial and trade and business diaspora. This differentiation was created based on the reason of displacement of diasporic communities. The most influential change in classical typographies brought in by the voluntary movement of different diasporic communities. Even the classical Jewish diaspora movement was not fully forced as some of the Jewish communities moved outside their homeland because of trade and business purposes (Cohen, 2008). So with time, the definition of diaspora has changed with added characteristics. A very comprehensive definition and characteristics of diaspora has been outlined by Sahoo and Maharaj (2007:5) who identified four elements constituting diaspora ‘firstly, an ethnic consciousness; secondly, an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; fourthly, there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world’.

In number of studies, a close relation between migration and diaspora has revealed in supporting Safran’s (2005) identification of migration as the primary mechanism of diaspora formation. Migration is the movement of individuals or groups from one place to another because of political, social and economic reason (Brazeil and Mannur, 2007). In most cases, those temporary displacements of

migrants turned into permanent settlement (Brah, 1996). This particular research will more focus in Bangladeshi diaspora, which was the result of the British Imperial presence in Indian subcontinent. Colonization is one of the most influencing reasons for creating labour and imperial diaspora (Huggan, 2001). Going further, Ashcroft et al. (2000:69) defined colonialism as a “radically diasporic movement”. From the very process of colonization, three types of diaspora have been identified (Ashcroft et al., 2000), firstly, a large number of Europeans i.e.: British, Portuguese, French travelled across the world to newly acquired colonies to show their political, economic and institutional presence. Secondly, those, who were mostly black and Asian, have been moved to colonial plantations to fulfil the need of cheap labour force. Finally, individuals moving from former colonies to colonial metropolis in search of better social life (Huggan, 2010). The first and second typologies have created imperial and labour diaspora subsequently. The third type, which is most recent among the three, was also influenced by globalization.

From the period of classical Jew diaspora to the current globalised movement, diaspora is in a state of ‘continuous formation and reformation’ (Cohen, 2008). Moreover in recent times, with the ease of communications and technological advancements, immigrants can move to one or multiple destination, sometimes settle down or move on to another new place. Cohen (2008:141), mentioned about four aspects of global age, which offers diaspora to exist, reform and grow further. Firstly, ‘A globalized economy’ enabled diaspora a higher degree of communication, better opportunities for business and economic development in host country as well as in homeland. A very good example of the effect of global economy is the movement of Japanese people around the world. Because of the expansion of Japanese multinational corporations, a large number of Japanese moved to the UK and European areas as well as other countries. It also resulted with the opening of number of Japanese restaurants, spas, schools and clubs in order to fulfil the demand of the community (Cohen, 2008). Similar examples has found in the case of Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian communities in the UK. Secondly, ‘New forms of international migration’ allowed migrants to make frequent movement between homeland and host country, bring families for reunion and in some cases opportunity to obtain citizenship in host country. Despite the recent tightening immigration system in the UK, there was an evidence of quick development of migrant

communities because of Government's welcoming of skilled professionals, businessmen and family members of early migrants (Cohen, 2008). Migrants with substantial wealth and talents replaced the trend of nineteenth century labour migration (Wang, 1992). Thirdly, 'The development of cosmopolitan sensibilities' offered migrants to connect and exchange with people from different place of the world. The idea of global space helped diasporic communities to create transnational relations with same ethnic groups all over the world. And finally, 'the revival of religion as a focus for social cohesion' helped diaspora to combine and continue to follow their religious beliefs and rituals in a foreign land. It helps diaspora to come under the same umbrella regardless of the nationality or country of origin; e.g.: Hinduism, Christianity or Islam are able to bring all followers under the same umbrella which can be defined 'religious diaspora' (Cohen, 2005). Subsequently, this various forms of combining diaspora also create a complex sense of diasporic identity.

Hence, the diasporic identity could be a complex issue to explore. 'A collective memory of homeland' and 'a strong ethnic group consciousness' are most influencing features of diaspora in creating diasporic identity. The early literature on diaspora discussed the 'social heterogeneity of the diaspora' (Werbner, 2000:6), where diaspora's identity and the discourse of migration was brought into discussion. The social formation and structure of diaspora were described as 'just not a fusion of discourses but a multiplicity of discourses, some intersecting, some mutually clashing and contradictory' (Werbner, 2000:6). The later part of the literature clarified diaspora as process of historical formations, changing overtime and responding to various social and political movements within the host society. Again, because of their long maintained transnational relations and loyalty to their place of origin diaspora remained hybrid and heterogeneous. Even after spending long time in places of settlement, diaspora live with a 'sense of displacement' (Werbner, 2000: 6). This sense of loyalty to the homeland has been influenced by the remarkable development of global media and communication system. Diasporas are able to maintain strong political and economic link with their homeland through active participation. This link with homeland has often described as 'diaspora consciousness' by Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Paul Gilroy (Bauman, 2007). According to Bauman, (2007: 71) this sense of diaspora as 'living here and relating to there'. It has been always a debate

in consideration to diaspora's sense of identity. It is crucial to identify, how diaspora look into their identity or how they defined themselves: a member of host nation or they are still holding their identity of origin. It could be a very complex scenario where a member of diaspora group could hold dual and sometimes more than two identities because the sense of identity sometimes goes beyond the place of living. Clifford (1994: 319) mentioned 'diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue'. So diaspora identity could be influenced by cultural attributes e.g.: food habit, religion, lifestyle and social structure, which has emphasised by Hall (1990), by describing diaspora identity as a result of continuous formation and reformation.

### **2.3. Food, diaspora and identity**

Levi-Strauss defined food practices "as a language, identifying the primary binary opposition, common to all cultures, between nature and culture" (cited by Lupton, 1996: 9). Similarly, Douglas (1975) underlined the important role of food in social life in both western and non-western culture by describing it as part of rituals. She saw the study of food as a means of decoding social events. Food items were illustrated as the indicator of social events e.g.: Easter, Christmas along with the identification of different days of the week (Douglas, 1975). Moreover, food items or presence of certain foods in a meal are able to reveal person or group's identity. 'The French version of the grand meal... dominated by the sequence of wines' not only reflects person or group's identity but also the identity of a nation (Douglas, 1975). At the personal level, food is able to identify the level of 'intimacy and distance' (Douglas 1975:256). By stating 'drinks are for strangers, acquaintances, workmen.... Meals are for family, close friends, honoured guests', Douglas (1975:256) justifies the role of food in creating and distinguishing social relationship. By analysing meals across various people and class, she also mentioned about food's representations in social class system.

Similarly, by arguing that 'eating is never a purely biological activity', Sidney Mintz (1996:7) underlines the role of food as a practice, which is 'conditioned by meaning' (Searles, 2002). Different diaspora groups exhibit differences in their food practice from other groups not only to show their cultural 'difference and

distinctiveness' but also to illustrate the importance and power of food (Searles, 2002). Food acts as the fundamental part of individual and collective identity integrated in 'cultural process and practice' (Brown et al., 2010). Food practice maintains and reinforces social identity of an individual or group, which 'in turn is conducive to psychological well being' (Brown et al., 2010). Similarly, social norms also determine the choice of food for individuals within a group and in some extent identify the source of food (Brown et al., 2010). Halal food practice in Muslim community in the UK and using recommended source (HMC Certified: Halal monitoring committee, UK) is an example of sociocultural practices in determining food behaviour of a group.

There are visible differences in eating style between diasporic groups, which also reflects their 'tradition' and 'culture'. Eating with hands for Bangladeshi people or using chopsticks among the Thai or Chinese population could underline their culture and ethnic identity. Again some of these cultural trends among the ethnic groups might change or be adopted by other people because of global cultural mixings where members join other group's celebrations or taste the food. Within this change culture, Dsylvia and Beagan (2011) have identified food as the central element of identity. Although he (Dsylvia) was born in Pakistan and by religion was a follower of Roman Catholic, he has been treated as *Goan* (a state of India formerly a Portuguese colony) only because of his mother and grandmother's frequent cooking of Goan food as he mentioned 'everyday material practices of cooking and eating were the most significant, perhaps the only, concrete and symbolic manifestations of an ethnic identity' (Dsylvia and Beagan, 2011: 279). It is not only a manifestation of identity but also a process including 'thinking, representations, rules and norms' (Jonsson et al., 2002).

### ***2.3.1. Food and transnationalism***

In defining diaspora, most of the early literatures have referred to the displacements of Jewish community experienced the trauma of exile. But the post-modern literatures have challenged the traditional ideas of diaspora as a scattered community with a 'positive dimensions of transnational existence and cosmopolitan consciousness' (Werbner, 2002). The idea of nationhood within diasporic community

moved into a larger spectrum because of spectacular technological development although the attachment towards homeland still remains strong and in some cases became stronger. Some of the recent literatures show that diasporas are connected with their homeland both 'ideologically and materially' (Werbner, 2002: 122). Werbner (2002: 121) described those connections as 'co-responsibility across the boundaries of empires, political communities or nations'. She has used the term 'co-responsibility' to clarify the unity among the diasporic communities through 'flow of cultural goods, philanthropic giving or political support' across the borders. Among all cultural goods which has crossed the border persuaded by diasporic need, food has its positioning at the high end. Diasporic communities brought their own culture and customs within the host nation. Again, the idea of transnationalism is not a new phenomenon but countries like Britain has given particular edge to that notion through the acceptance of 'cultural plurality' (Werbner, 2002: 120). As a result the temporary sojourns became permanent settlement, transportation of small amount of food items moved into higher demand.

The essence of food travelling does not lie into satisfying physical needs but also to fulfil psychological need. Food with its special ability 'to mobilise strong emotions' (Appadurai, 1981:494) can make people think about their past, their homeland and families. Lupton (1996) defined food as a stirrer of emotions: personal or collective. Food, with its multi-dimensional ability can draw differences between nations (Lupton, 1996). It also acts as a carrier for crossing cultural boundaries (Van den Berghe, 1984). This border crossing tendencies of food sometimes goes beyond the movement of food ingredients itself. Special recipes, cooking methods, spices and to some extent cookware travels from homeland to make the food more authentic and tasty. It is believed that only those particular ingredients or cookware can bring the expected result in cooking. It is also crucial to note that such mobility of food and food oriented products to make diaspora feel of home in abroad. The movement of food is about movement of feeling within family, friends and homeland. It is also believed that by transferring food and recipes, diasporas are able to retain their culture and traditions within diasporic communities across the world (Werbner, 2002).

It has become a common practice among the diasporas to bring food items from their homeland. From my personal experience, I have seen my friends bringing

cooked food e.g.: meat, dry fish from Bangladesh. During the special occasions like Eid-ul-Azha (when Muslims ritually sacrifice animals), people carry that sacred meat with them to different places and to some extent to different countries. With the transfer of this sacred meat, they transfer the sacredness of religion through food. Even when friends and family travel back home, they are asked to bring food items to others. It is also evident that bringing food and food-associated products for friends and families is a common practice among diasporas. Brown et al. (2010) found in their study on immigrant students in southern England that because of easy access to the international transport system, students are able to bring foodstuffs from their home country. They also use their 'friendship networks to bring ingredients from home and the reliance on packages sent by family members' (Brown et al., 2010). Walker (2012) has experienced similar situation while doing his study among the Comorian diaspora. The author was asked to bring some food items by one of his Comorian friend as he was travelling to the Comoro Islands. From the description of the researcher it is evident that those specified items have relation with Comorian identity and memory of the people of Comorian islands. One of the specified items was 'ladu' which believed to be healthy and able to keep people well while the Comorians used to go for long journeys, specially 'long voyages along the Indian Ocean' (Walker, 2012:191). Alongside with the voyage 'This small ball of rice flour' (from which ladu made from) also represents the 'regret, longing, nostalgia, excitement, fear and trepidation' (Walker, 2012:190) of Comorian people. From the study, we come across some other food items, which also represents Comorian identity. *Putu* is one of them. It is simply like chilli sauce, which made locally and believed to add extra taste in food. It has also revealed from Walker's (2012) study that 'food' sometimes act as a medium of exchange. Before his travel to Zanzibar, one of his friends advised him to take some bread for his cousin, so in return the researcher would be able to get some help there.

A similar example has given by Gardner and Kanwal (2012: 971) where they defined Bangladeshi communities in Britain as a 'transnational community' because of the 'exchange of goods and ideas' among the people from Bangladesh and the UK. Many Bangladeshi settlers consider Bangladesh as 'central to their identity' (Gardner and Kanwal, 2012: 971). The frequent movements of families across the two countries have influenced their feeling of having 'Bangladeshi identity'. Moreover,

some group members believe ‘maintaining connections’ as a way of ‘reinforcing family bonds for their children and exposing them to Bangladeshi ways of doing things’ (Gardner and Kanwal, 2012: 971). And this connection helps people from the Sylhet region to develop their social status and achieve financial security through various business opportunities and social development projects e.g.: educational institutions, hospitals built by the migrant Sylheti community members. It is also evident that this relationship has been used as a medium of migration. Transnational marriages were seen as one of the most anticipated aspirations amongst the Sylheti unmarried men and a route to their success (Gardner, 2008). Economic and social development in some areas of Sylhet region is prominent and creates differentiation with others, who do not have a ‘*bileti/Bideshi*’ (British) connection. Again, this so long practices of migration through marriage within Sylheti communities seems to be at risk in recent because of the change within the family dynamics amongst the British-born Bangladeshis along with continuous restriction in British immigration rules.

### ***2.3.2. Food, memory and nostalgia***

Food, most often defined as an essential item for the biological nourishment for human body as a source of energy although ‘it is an intrinsically multi-layered and multidimensional subject with social, psychological, physiological and symbolic dimensions’ (Holtzman, 2006:362). Similarly, memory relates to human psychology, anthropology and in some extent history. Hence the critical analysis of relation between food and memory requires a ‘cross-disciplinary approach’ (Holtzman, 2006:362). In his anthropological work piece Holtzman (2006: 363) showed food as the central element to analyse the ‘complexity of memory’. As the central integrator, food has shown as a creator of ‘historically constructed identity’; ‘various forms of nostalgia’ and also a medium of ‘remembering and forgetting’ Holtzman (2006: 364). Sutton’s (2001) presentation of food as the powerful passage for memory to remain and reinforce within human mind and Lupton’s (2004) explorations of food surrounded memories also determined the strong dependency and inter-relation between food and memory within the social structure. As previously mentioned about the multi-layered meaning of food, “some foods are for personal consumption, a private invocation of sentiment and memory” (Walker, 2012:191). Even though, food

is one of the many elements of determining identity, it has its special place because of its strong link between personal feelings. Association of food, memory and identity sometimes go beyond the general characteristics of cultural symbols. Going further some of the memories distinctively related with specific foods. For example, eating '*ladu*' reminds Comorians about their childhood, when they used to eat them 'in the dhows' (Walker, 2012). Moreover different types of food could often take someone to different part of their life. In her study Bajic-Hajdukovic (2013) illustrated how sending food can influence the relationship between immigrants and their families in homeland. After an analytical review she categorised all travelled food items into three types based on the memory they are able to recollect: 'raw, cooked and branded food' (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2013: 50). She defined raw food as re-collector of memory from childhood. Giving example of a special variety of cherry of Belgrade, one of the participants mentioned how it managed to evoke her memory of childhood, while she migrated to Portugal (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2013). While these special raw foods can make someone nostalgic of their childhood (Sutton, 2001), cooked food can take someone to their family members i.e. mother, grandmother, sisters and aunts. Cooked foods are more person specific (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2013) as they belong to special recipes and every one has their own way of cooking. Radoslave (one of the participants of Bajic-Hajdukovic's study) mentioned how she used to take cooked food for her immigrant son in Canada, which allowed them to go back to their days in Belgrade. Again, a change in food habit was also found in the study as the migrant son denied to eat those Belgradian food as they were too greasy and heavy (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2013). Hence food behaviour and cooking process expected to change over time and especially over generations. It has also found that parents within the family (especially mothers) want to transmit cooking techniques to their children (especially daughters) with a hope of transferring traditions over generations.

Additionally, cooking ethnic dishes or following the recipe given by mother or relatives help diaspora to feel home abroad. In her study of the Asian diaspora, Mannur (2007) describes how an immigrant keeps interest in his/her ethnic food in a different environment. She also added that food worked as "intellectual and emotional anchor" (Mannur, 2007:13) with their homeland. It works as a symbol of their identity and serving "both as a placeholder for making cultural distinctiveness and as a palliative for dislocation" (Mannur, 2007:13). Similarly, Katrak (1997) described

her experience of migration as a student and how she started cooking Indian food at her home in USA. Mannur (2007) also mentioned the role of diasporic women in reproducing ethnic culture through their cooking and preparation of food, which highlights the initial migration of Bangladeshi women to the UK and their role in changing food consumption patterns within the community. Certain food and even the way it prepared can often take some one back to their childhood or homeland. In Mannur (2007), illustration of the recipe for 'bainguan-ka-bartha' also reflects the authenticity of food and its role as nostalgic agent. Special recipes, taste and smell of particular food can take diaspora for a temporary flight to their homeland or past (Sutton, 2001). To describe the power of food in creating memory Mankekar (2002) has gone even further by illustrating immigrant Indian peoples food shopping behavior. He argues that shopping in particular market place for ethnic food also helps diaspora to go back to their homeland through experiencing similar atmosphere of food market in abroad.

Hence, food along with its ability of recollecting individual's personal memory can also reinforce group's collective or public remembrance and in some cases unveiling group's identity. Most nations or ethnic groups have some special cuisine which belongs to them and reveals their identity among others although some scholars argue around the notion of authenticity, modification and standardization of ethnic foods (Holtzman, 2006). For instance, European Union's regulation on '*lardo di Colonatta*' (a special cuisine made with pork using white marble from Alps) forced Tuscans to adopt certain process in preparation (Leitch, 2003). As it has prepared using two very local ingredients, it arises the memory of a particular place and people, which has been reinforced and celebrated by the annual *lardo* festival (Holtzman, 2006). Similarly, in '*Baishakhi Mela*' (a festival observing Bengali New Year) the collective memory of a nation is celebrated through a special cuisine called '*Panta Illis*' (Watery rice with Ilsha fish). Boisard (2003), in his book '*Camembert: A national Myth*' illustrate how '*Camembert*' (French cheese) reflects the history of France starting from the French Revolution to the emergence of European Union through its change in production and adaptation of pasteurization. Rather than scientific requirements, the tension between pasteurization and un-pasteurization became the clash between tradition and modernity. Although '*Camembert*' was primarily invented by a couple of countrywomen, it eventually became a symbol of

French identity as a whole. Similarly, for Japanese, 'rice' has a double folded meaning: one hand it is a symbol of food and in another as a symbol of land (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993). Even though Japanese people adopted other cuisine e.g.: Chinese noodles, Indian curries and fast food like KFC, rice always belongs to their personal and national memory (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993). Similar example has found in Wilk's (1999) study on Belizean authentic food. With an evidence of high demand of imported food, Belizeans kept their ethnic foods e.g.: *Fry Jack* (deep fried dough made of flour), *Kriols* (a dish mix of boiled egg, fish etc) in their offering to the tourists. As a whole it is evident that with the influence of globalization, migration and people's movement from one place to another, ethnic food remains in the heart of diasporas to create nostalgic state.

### **2.3.3. Food, status and class**

Food creates differentiation among social groups through its distinctiveness. The creation, transformation and reproduction of food vary from one society to another (Forero and Smith, 2011). In contrast, within one society, group members eat the same kind of food as a representation of culture whereby the taste of food is treated as sense of culture (Falk, 1994). In their study Forero and Smith (2011) showed how this cultural sense of 'taste' changed over generations. They also examined the 'transmission of values' among generations referring to food consumption of Ukrainian families in Bradford. The influence of family over individual's choice was reflected in their study. It is also evident that beside their family impact individual's 'income and education' tend to influence individual's food preferences (Lupton, 2006). In consideration to groups 'collective diasporic identity', food was found to be a key marker in creating and sustaining a sense of common identity.

While conducting the research, Forero and Smith (2011) looked into the role of rituals in maintaining diasporic identity. Some particular practices were identified as influencing factor for food behaviour of successive generation with an evidence of 'inter-generational tension'. From this study, the notion of 'authenticity' in food has been examined and clarified and found a strong association between authentic food and 'traditional food'. For the Ukrainian first generation migrants 'no food is better

than Ukrainian food' and they like to pass 'Ukrainian traditional cooking' to next generations (Forero and Smith, 2011:85). For them these traditional dishes symbolically represent Nation's custom and even sometimes become representative of 'national-ethnic identity' (Murcott, 1996). For the primary settlers, foreign food is unacceptable even outside their home. In contrast, the younger generation are more willing to embrace other culture and food. Moreover they want to establish their British identity where they treat Ukrainian food as a part of 'their heritage rather than a signifier of their national identity' (Forero and Smith, 2011:86). A distinction within community members was also found in Slovenian community where they were divided as 'traditionalists and post-traditionalist' based on their ability to accept other ethnic cuisines and customs (Trivadar and Luthar, 2005).

Food practice, along with its ability to reinforce culture within diasporic society, often used to justify individual's status. In some societies, status is determined by one's ability in showing in various occasions e.g.: marriage, religious festivals and social works. Gardner (2008) mentioned about changed Sylheti villages where *Londonis* are more involved in building social infrastructures i.e. schools, hospitals and roads which helped them to get *ijjat* (respect) with the society. Families with Londoni ties are able to build extraordinary houses; able to get married in families with higher status and in some cases changed their family names to match with Muslim saint Shah Jalal (the first person to introduce Islam in Sylhet region) (Gardner, 2008). While carrying out various social activities within the social structure, Londonis get involved in competition of showing their wealth. For example 'long-term competition between two of the wealthiest lineages in Jalalgaon reached fever pitch when one family built a new mosque on their land, thus splitting the village over which mosque to attend' (Gardner, 2008:489). Influence of those activities in Sylhet crosses the border and create competitive atmosphere here in London. Competition carries over fund donation in charities, *kurbani* (slaughtering animal during Eid-ul-Azha), celebrations and political affiliations. *Ijjat* in Sylhet become significantly important to determine social positioning here in the UK. In a similar note, Walker (2012) illustrated the importance of food in determining social class and its role in celebration i.e. marriage. '*Aada*' is the long practiced celebration among the Comorians where they are obliged to 'feed the village' (Walker, 2012) during the marriage. The whole '*aada*' process requires a number of 'preparations and

consumption of food' (Walker, 2012). During the event of *aada* marriage, both bride and groom's family has to engage themselves in various rituals of eating. The *aada* marriage starts with the first event: '*djeleyo*', with the distribution of rice and meat by the bride's family among the villagers. '*Djeleyo*' followed by '*mwaliko*', an event arranged by groom's family to feed the elderly young (*mnamdji*) of the village. Although groom's family bear the expense of '*mwaliko*', the food has to be cooked by the women of the bride's family. Similarly a meal has to be prepared by the women of groom's family to feed the men of bride's family (Walker, 2012).

In Walker's study it clearly identified the attempt of Comorian's to 'fulfil their *aada* obligation and preparing *aada* type meal for diaspora community' has failed. Even the foods are prepared in Comorian way, they failed to recognise its significance with the diasporic community, which, critically acknowledged the importance of people/eaters over food and eating practice. Moreover, it is evident that in diaspora, a different form of identity can be produced from 'food and eating practice'. Similarly Gardner (1993) shows in her studies on Sylheti communities, where *desh* (homeland) is a place with rich meaning of identity. It also contains a strong link with rich food and spirituality because of the Saints and the land is believed to be sacred and fertile. Sylheti communities in the UK continued sending remittance to the homeland in order to support their family members and relatives as well as to keep their social status within the social structure (Zeitlyn, 2013). But interestingly their social and economic condition here in the UK remained 'poor and marginalised' (Zeitlyn, 2013:256).

Similarly, Searles (2002) conducted a study on Inuit communities in Arctic region and looked into their identity where the influence of food on their social and economic status revealed. Within in Inuit society, group members contribute towards their groups by providing food support to others. Most of them contribute by hunting and others unable to hunt offer good bought from market (Searles, 2002). Based on the amount of contributions, group members hold positions in the social organisation. The highest contributors most likely to get higher positions with the social structure (Searles, 2002). Similar social practices were found in Gardner's (2008) study on Sylheti communities where immigrant members of the society secure their position in political and social arena by providing financial support or by taking part in various local development initiatives. Furthermore, within Inuit community, foods are

classified based on its origin. Food collected from local areas, especially from various sea mammals treated as original Inuit food and are believed to be healthier. According to group members, foodstuff is able to keep body warm even after consumed frozen (Searles, 2002). Although living in the same region, because of different food habits, Qallunaats (an ethnic group in Arctic region) are identified as less healthier population. Unwillingness of consumption of seal meat, which is good for blood and health, is recognized for the paleness of Qallunaats (Searles, 2002). From the practice of Halal food, we can find same idea, where blood of slaughtered animals treated as unhealthy for human being. Furthermore, the philosophy of respecting certain animals in Hinduism founded in Inuit culture where refusal of eating hunted animals not only treated as ‘ a sign of disrespect but it can lead to danger, as animals are regarded as moral and spiritual agents’ (Searles, 2002: 65).

#### ***2.3.4. Food and Gender***

The migration of women played a key role in creating new dynamics within the diasporic communities. Initially expanding mobility of capital, people’s desire to improve their economic and political life were the underlying reason of migration (Brah, 1996) which eventually transformed into finding opportunity for a better and secured social life, mostly driven by this feminisation of migration. In the study of food, gender plays a very significant role as it does in “structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political structures” (Moore 1988:6). In her introductory note, Counihan (1998:1) highlighted how men and women’s power in society ‘contributed and influenced by food production, distribution and consumption’. She also explored the symbolic power of food in establishing social status and the value of men and women (Cunihan, 1998). It is believed that, Food has all elements of identity: as individual, male or female, member of a family and in bigger context a member of a nation (Holm, 1997). Cooking and eating food is so fundamental and anchored with individuals that they unconsciously carry that to a new destination (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997). Like other transnational societies, diasporic women are treated as the contributors of culture (Mankekar, 2002), ‘who are perceived to be keepers of tradition and sowers of culture in their families and in the larger community’ (Dsylva and Beagan, 2011:280). And women’s practice of cooking is one of the fundamental ways of cultural transmission (Dsylva and Beagan, 2011).

Besides, its own cultural elements, ‘cooking gives the food and the eaters their place in the world and a sense of meaning’ (Jonsson et al., 2002: 329). Giving this ‘sense of meaning’ to family members is still part of women’s daily life ‘embodied with positive knowledge and power’ (Jonsson et al., 2002: 329). Again women’s contributions towards the cultural reinforcement and transmission often been unrecognised, as it has been expected to be a part of their role in the society besides some feminist scholars tried to established that as distress for women (Narayan, 1997; Beagan et al., 2008).

Although feminist scholars sometimes argue that cooking is oppressive to women, they also recognise that it can endow them with power and authority within the social structure (Mankekar, 2002). Food preparations have also contributions in creating gender-oriented identity and help women to play a significant role within the family. Charles and Kerr (1988) in ethnography in the UK in 1980s looking at women with young children, argued for the links between ‘proper meals’ and the constitution of what were seen as ‘proper families’. In recent gender equality society, although men are involved in foodworks, in most cases it cannot challenge the intimate relation between food and femininity (Aarseth and Olsen, 2008). Women role of nurturing culture and passion for transmitting that to next generation has portrayed by Gardner and Kanwal (2012) in a magnificent manner. They described the transformation of controlling over cooking within Bangladeshi diaspora. Most of the Bangladeshi women started to migrate to the UK in the early 1980s. Since their arrival in this country, they started to take over the responsibilities of cooking from men. It became the symbol of tradition and culture rather than a struggle of subsistence, which was practiced by the early migrant men. It became a common practice within family culture that women will look after cooking and other household activities. This practice of cooking by women passed into younger generations with some exceptions (Gardner and Kanwal, 2012). In some cases, even the young girls within the family help their parents with cooking.

Similarly, in Walker’s study (2012), the kitchen has often identified as a place of gathering and socialising. From the Comorian (Walker’ 2012) context *paya* (kitchen with open fire) is normally situated in the inner area of a house. Women gather there and they speak while they cook. Young girls learn how to cook also they

support their mother or elder sister in cooking (Walker, 2012). Although, most of the households have western kitchen (i.e., without an open fire), they prefer to use the traditional way of cooking unless they have spent long time abroad and got used to western style of cooking. Although participation of women in cooking has been found in both Bangladeshi and Comorian communities, men are the first to eat. In some cases within smaller family context male and female members of the family eat together, but again preference in the dinner table always goes to male member of the family. Regardless the preference, eating together in a table reinforces the ‘sense of belongings’ (Walker, 2012) and more often brings nostalgic picture or memory of a special food item, which might be consumed before or in their childhood.

### **2.3.5. Food and Religion**

Looking into the population demographics in Bangladesh, 88 per cent population are Muslim. The rest constitute with other minority groups i.e. Hindu, Christian and Buddhist. There is a very similar picture can be found within the Bangladeshi population in the UK. Especially in England, 92 per cent of Bangladeshi population are Muslim. Obviously within this Muslim population there are segments where people are believer of different Islamist ideologies e.g. Barelvis, Deobandis, Tabligi Jamaat and Sufis (Garbin, 2005). Although there are some arguments around the influence of religion in social, political and civic life of the population, a noticeable influence of religion has found in this groups’ lifestyle. With food practice, the influence of religion is more influential and obvious. The presence of halal foods and shops all over the place has clearly justified the role of religion in food consumption.

### **2.4. Food, identity and Bangladeshi diaspora**

As discussed earlier part of this literature review, formation of Bangladeshi diaspora was the result of the presence of British imperial power in the Indian subcontinent. A number of Sylheti people worked as *lascars* (seamen) in the East India company ships. After the world war, with the industrial growth in the UK, a large number of seamen found themselves occupying various industrial positions (Ballard, 1994). The majority of early migrants were male and unmarried (Gardner

and Shukur, 1994), so cooking was part of their daily life. Scarcity of traditional Bangladeshi food and ingredients forced them to bring food and special spices from their homeland. In the earlier stage, chicken and mutton became the mostly consumed items, as it was impossible to find traditional fishes in the UK (Gardner and Shukur, 1994)). Again, the mass movement of Bangladeshi migrants to the UK was ‘late twentieth century phenomenon’ (Ballard, 2007:589). As regulations got stricter in early 1970, immigration pattern has changed and those male migrants started to bring their families and children and eventually transformed as permanent settlers. As a result of family reunion, by the mid 1980, number of Bangladeshi immigrants reach 100,000 (Gardner and Sukur, 1994). Family reunion and becoming permanent settler had changed the social dimension of the community resulting with noticeable change in food consumption pattern. Women took over the responsibility of cooking and household resulting high demand for traditional food and spices in the UK, which created opportunity to develop ethnic entrepreneurship among the Bangladeshi communities. Beside that, because of textile industrial declination in mid 1980s, most members of Bangladeshi community entered into restaurant trade as alternative source of income (Gardner and Sukur, 1994). Hence, food became an inevitable part of their private life along with the source of economic solvency.

Although, food has a strong influence on family life, a sign of inter-generational tension has been found in Gardner’s (2002) study on Bangladeshi communities where young population expressed their mixed feelings about their identity and their food practice. They describe themselves as British nationals but not neglecting their roots in Bangladesh or their identity as Muslim (Eade and Garbin, 2006). Parallel feeling of ‘hybrid identity’ has been found in the study done by Gardner and Kanwal (2012) in Sylheti community in London. In response to the study, a young member describes himself as both British and Bangladeshi. This feeling of hybrid identity could be result of different social factors such as learning within the family, association with Bangladeshi food and culture or it could be even influenced by other community members. Additionally, a practical or imaginary comparison of lifestyle and environment with here in the UK and Sylhet also reinforces the ‘Bangladeshi-ness’ amongst the young population. Either their visits or story told by the elders creates an imaginary landscape of Bangladesh and its beauty, which reflected in some studies. Even after migration, most of the Bangladeshi

families in the UK have lots of their family members living in Bangladesh. So frequent visits to 'back home' are a very common practice among the families living in the UK. As found in Gardner and Kanwal's (2012) study, some of the family members especially women, elders and children spent long time in Sylhet on their visits. Marriages and other celebrations are identified as the most common reasons for their visit to Sylhet. As a result the young population come across various cultural celebrations and customs, which are more Bangladeshi than Londoni (local expression of anything from the UK) and in longer term these customs ingrained in their life style.

Immigration of women played a key role in creating new image of Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK. Initially expanding mobility of capital, people's desire to improve their economic and political life were the underlying reason of migration (Brah, 1996) which eventually transformed into finding opportunity for a better and secured social life, mostly driven by this 'feminisation of migration'. In the study of food, gender plays a very significant role as it does in "structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political structures" (Moore 1988:6). In her introductory note, Cunihan (1998) highlighted how men and women's power in society contributed and influenced by food production, distribution and consumption. She also explored the symbolical power of food in establishing social status and value of men and women (Cunihan, 1998). In this very study, food was shown as an element measurement of men and women's ability of production and consumption of food which also differs from one to another society based on the overall economic structure i.e.: class, culture and family.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

The literature on food and diaspora studies demonstrates that the relation between food and identity in diaspora is a multi-dimensional and complex experience. This experience started with the dispersal of Jewish communities and through continuous formation and reformation found a new shape of meaning. Most of the literature on diaspora studies dealt with the theories of diaspora, especially the characteristics of diaspora and change within the diasporic formation. Obviously some contemporary literatures provided insight about the identity and food practices

of some diaspora. However, the role of food in the formation of ‘diasporic identity’ left undiscovered by the scholars. Moreover, a very few literature provided insights about food practices and identity of Bangladeshi communities in the UK. Although, there are some studies were conducted in addressing various health issues within this particular communities, the relation between food and identity left untapped. So this particular research on Bangladeshi communities will be able to address some of these issues and to provide sociological understanding of food, identity and diaspora.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will elaborate a methodology, which has emerged from the insights gained from the literature review. The literature review confirms that despite of the adaptation in definition and characteristics of diaspora; food, culture and identity of diaspora are the inevitable parts of diaspora studies. In fact, there has been a significant evidence of the role of food practice, cultural beliefs in creating personal or collective identity and in the formation of diasporic communities.

Food practice and cultural beliefs as a significant phenomenon highlights the importance of diasporic identity in social structure. It initialises the broad sociological issue of the compatibility of diasporic identity within the globalized world. Moreover, it escalates the question of how diasporic identity create, thrive and reinforce through food practice and cultural belief system within a new society. Hypothetically, diaspora want to keep own ethnic identity intact in order to create distinctiveness within the host society. While a new culture invites diaspora to adapt and assimilate, ethnic food practice and cultural beliefs provide diaspora a strong framework to keep diasporic identity. Additionally, by following home culture and food practice diaspora keep touch with the homeland in order fulfil the hope of ultimate return to homeland.

Hence the purpose and the objective of the research are to explore, in particular to Bangladeshi case study, the role of food practice and food related cultural beliefs in creating, maintaining and reinforcing identity. As a result the research will be able to contribute in the field of diaspora studies, in particular to food and identity. Moreover, it will also be able to give an insight of the food behaviour Bangladeshi communities in the UK, which hasn't been explored much by the scholars.

In this methodology chapter, I would seek to elaborate how this particular research will explore the relation between food and identity within the diaspora. Following 'interpretivism' as theoretical perspective, in particular taking

‘ethnomethodology’ as the methodological approach, which believed to be successful in studying a particular cultural group (Cresswell, 2007), the study will look into the food practice of Bangladeshi communities in the UK to identify the relation between food and identity. The empirical data will be collected through in depth interviews with Bangladeshi communities in multiple Boroughs in London (Borough of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking). Along with the interviews, participant observation will be made about the food practice within the family and public environment. As the research will explore human practice and belief system: a subjective meaning of food, qualitative research will be the most appropriate methodology to follow. So, the following section will describe and justify the deployment of the methods: in-depth interview and participant observation.

### **3.2. In-depth interviews:**

Unlike quantitative research, interviewing in qualitative research is less structured and more informal (Bryman, 2004). Flexibility and opportunity to create a verbal and non-verbal communication between researcher and respondent is the most powerful tool of interviewing that allow researchers to go in depth into the view of the respondents. Although not fully structured, within the in-depth interview process in qualitative research, researchers always construct the interviews around some key issues related to the research objectives. And sometimes researchers introduce further questions while having the conversation in order to get better understanding of the respondent’s views. Again a guide is necessary to carry out the interview in a successful manner, more specifically to derive information about the areas, which the researchers want to explore. As the research will deploy observation as one of the methods, it would be more likely to have some interviews during the observation process. So participant observation and interviewing will be used as an integrated method to fulfil the research objective.

As mentioned earlier some key issues related to research objectives has brought into the interviewing process. This particular research has explored the relation between food and identity in a social context; the topic guide had cover following key areas:

- Respondents' immigration history, if any i.e. when and how they immigrated and settle down.
- Respondent's evaluation of homeland and host country i.e. food and culture.
- Food practices among the respondents i.e. what kind of food they consume and purchase, why, from where and how.
- The factors influencing respondents' food practices i.e. cultural, religious or any other.
- Comparison of food practices within the family and public environment; do they find any difference between the two, if any, how and why.
- Which culture and identity they find themselves more belongs to, host or home culture and why.
- How respondents' relate their identity with food practice.

The interview process has been carried out in parallel with participant observation and some of the interviews were conducted with the family members of the observed families. To select respondents, I have approached number of community members through personal and social links. During the selection process, following factors have taken consideration in choosing participants:

*Generation:* During the selection process I did consider participants from different generations based on their immigration to the UK. Most of my participants were first generation migrants. First generation migrant has given me opportunity to have a clear picture of the Bangladeshi communities in the UK in late eighties and early nineties. It also provided insights about the factor influencing Bangladeshi migration in the UK. Additionally, it has given me a comparative picture of Bangladeshi families in the UK. Similarly, I have chosen some participants from second generation who were born and brought up in the UK. So I had the opportunity to hear the voice of two different generations. Half of my respondents were female participants. Although it was little difficult to get access to the female members of the community, my personal contacts helped me lot to get access to them.

Most of the interviews took place in the respondent's house apart from one interview was conducted in a library. I was warmly welcomed and the accessibility

was very good. In majority of the houses, I was offered food and drinks. It is important to mention that I had to take part in dinner in couple of places as they insisted me to do that. Again it was a good opportunity for me to ask some more questions informally and discuss some issues around culture during the dinner.

Although, all of the interviews were recorded, I wrote down some important points while they speak. So that I could continue asking more questions around those key points they mentioned. After every interview I would write my notes as organised as possible compare to the research questions. I also reviewed my notes and questionnaire after interviews and amended them accordingly.

They were some significant factors, which helped me to conduct the interview relatively in ease manner. I have briefed them in advance about my research interest. I have also discussed with them before I have started my actual interview. Moreover, some of the participants were very interested in sharing their thoughts as the research outlined their culture and identity. The participants also felt in some extent they are supporting the community through their participation. In the same time, I had one occasion whereby the participant was speaking outside of my research area. Overall, however, I found the interview process has finished as per my plan and time frame. It is important to mention that some of the interviews were conducted in Bengali/Sylheti language or sometimes mixed with English. It is also noticeable that most of the participants can speak a minimum level of English required in daily communication.

It was very effective to obtain in-depth information and also to justify the data gathered from the observation. In addition to that, every generation within the family has be given preference and interviewed separately to gain knowledge about changes of social practices and norms over generations. As evident from the literatures, it was expected to find some intergenerational changes, which was very crucial to identify for this particular research because food and identity sometimes belongs to individual belief and practice. Also to identity women's role in food practice and cultural reproduction, I have interviewed the female members of the family. I have conducted eight interviews (four male and four female) to gather data for this particular study (for respondent's detail see appendix)

### **3.3. Participant Observation:**

Blumer (1969) described how people make sense of their surroundings and the world. Individual and collective action and interactions were identified as tools for creating meaning of the subjective world (Blumer, 1969). In addition to that, Mead (1934) mentioned about the importance of individual practices in constructing society. He also defined society itself as the combination of individual's action and interactions (Mead, 1934). Similarly, Berger and Luckman (1966) underlined the importance of individual and groups behaviour and interactions in constructing society and the world. Again Schutz (1967) argues that these meanings made by the individuals are only derivable by the insiders of the society or the world, not accessible to outsiders. Hence to understand the meaning of social actions, it is important to have an insider's view, which is one of the most applicable characteristics of participant observation. Participant observation with its ability to access and interact, able to explore and unveil the meaning made by people about the everyday life. It also allows researchers to understand the behaviour and thoughts of the individual and groups are being studied.

Moreover, participant observation is not only a single method, but also a mixture of multiple methods that involves observation, informant and respondent interviewing and in some extent analysis of documents in order to study certain subject areas (Denzin, 1989). Because of its ability to apply multiple methods, participant observation can also reduce the limitations of research resulting a high expectation in fulfilling the objectives of the research. Hence participant observation is very effective and successful method in studying culture, social norms and practices, human behaviour and the relationship between people and society. To justify the effectiveness of participant observation in studying culture and practice, Mason (2002) has given number of reasons that includes the ability of going beyond the interviews, verbal and non verbal communications and analysis of materials. Moreover participant observation can be helpful in gaining significant knowledge through observation and participation, as some of the knowledge is inaccessible through interviews, verbal or non-verbal expression and description of events. So it is

essential to be a part of the social actions and behaviour to discover the underlying meaning and knowledge.

For the purpose of the research, researchers disguise their true identity in the process and become a part of the participants. Through mixing and spending time with participants, a complete participant learns and identifies the true picture of a society or group. There are number of positive aspects to be a complete participant which allow them to be un-recognised as researcher and achieve better acceptance among the participants. In my research I accomplished myself as a complete participant while I took part in *Baishakhi Mela* (Fair during the first day of Bengali new year) with my friends and family. In fact, some of my friends were informed about my research but did not realise or recognise myself as a researcher in that occasion.

In this particular research, the observation process was done in a way, which is little different from the traditional observation process. The whole process carried out along with interviewing process. Some opportunities were unexpected. Initially I was planning to carry out the data collected through interviews only. But I came across various situations where I had opportunity to observe the food practices at participants home. The second interview I had done was in a home in Tower Hamlet near Poplar. It was in the morning around 10.30am. As soon as I have reached participant's home, I was offered breakfast along with coffee and snacks. That particular occasion influenced me to plan observation while doing my interviews. As most of the interviews were conducted at participant's home, I was offered food in every place. In one of the participant's home I had to join in dinner, as it was part of their culture to offer food to any guest come to their houses. Similarly, in some of the houses the participants allowed me to look into their kitchen, food stocks and the spices they used. So these provided me the opportunity to look into their identities through their food and cultural practices.

As the research unveiled the relationship between food practice, culture and identity of a social group, participant observation was very appropriate methods to use. Through participant observation I was able to come across the daily action and interaction of the individuals and groups within the society. In particular, having

opportunity to participate and observe family meals helped me to identify the norms and traditions within the family atmosphere. It also allowed me to explore the role of food in creating identity among the family members. Moreover through informal discussion, I was able to gain insight about of different cultural issues e.g.: rituals, festivals, ceremonies and religion in creating and reinforcing identity. Additionally, the interview process went very smooth as those interactions worked as icebreaker.

The role of women and senior family members were given particular attention during the observation to identify the process of cultural transformation over generations. To get a clearer understanding of any inter-generational tensions and difference in cultural practices, I have explored the generational difference. Also by observing the kitchen and cooking process allowed me to gain substantial knowledge about different space within family structure as number of literature given importance on 'kitchen' as one of the reflectors of cultural identity. Along with my observations within the family environment, I went to couple of public gathering e.g. Shadwell shopping Centre (ethnic market places), *Baishaki Mela* (public gathering during the first day of Bengali year). It was also crucial to identify the differences in individual or groups behavioural pattern in particular to food practice. Again, it is difficult to determine my actual position within the process i.e. participant-as-observer or complete observer. But within the observation process most of the time I was participant-as-observer with an exception of couple of occasions where I was complete observer.

Although, participant observation was criticised by scholars because the presence of researcher within the process have claimed to influence the outcome of the observation, it has an acceptance as a strong established method within the sociological and anthropological research. 'Going native' and 'observer bias' was also mentioned in criticism of participant observation, which could result in unreliable and invalid data (McCall and Simmons, 1969: 2). Again those critics lost credibility as comparing other methods used in sociology, participant observation is less likely to be invalid, biased or unreliable because of its ability to validate data through its multiple techniques. Moreover, through participant observation the researcher is capable to 'secure his data within the mediums, symbols and experiential worlds which have meaning to his respondents' (Vidich, 1969:79). Obviously there are some limitations

remained to this research particularly spending time in kitchen or observe the actual cooking process for long time. But as an insider and being a part of the same ethnic group, I believed to have successfully concluded the process.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

Participant observation as a method in sociological research has proven to be effective and successful in discovering social phenomenon. Hence the selection of in-depth interview as a method of this research is expected to unveil the relation between food and identity within the context of Bangladeshi communities in the UK. Additionally, participant observation is expected to support in justifying the data gathered from the interview process. Finally, it is expected that, with the selected methods, the research will be able to fulfil the research objectives and provide significant knowledge in the field of diaspora studies.

## Chapter 4: Finding and Analysis

### 4.1. Migration and Bangladeshi diaspora:

As detailed in the literature review, diaspora is the result of immigration. So is the situation for Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK. From the fieldwork, it is evident that the mass migration of Bangladeshi diaspora started in seventies and continued until the end of the century. As of my findings I would like to categorise the Bangladeshi migrants into three different groups: unskilled or primary migrants, family migrants and skilled migrants. These typologies also can be categorising according to the time of their migration. Obviously the primary migration of Bangladeshis was mostly from Sylhet and they worked as seamen and eventually worked in industrial sectors. The number of primary immigrants were not very big so as the opportunities for the community. The biggest boost of Bangladeshi/Sylheti migration has seen in early to mid eighties (Gardner, 2002), which has justified by my fieldwork.

I have identified there are number of folds in the Bangladeshi immigration in the UK. Among the entire migration trend, family reunion was mostly used medium for further migration of Bangladeshi people in the UK, which was clearly manifested from one of the respondents:

*“I left my children in desh (Bangladesh). My father had citizenship here, so I came..... I got my citizenship then brought my children. My father came here before my birth”*

She continues:

*“I came in 1997. After one or two months my youngest son born here.... then one or two years gone... I applied to bring other children... But application was refused. So I got new job and applied again and managed to bring them here in 2003”*

From the statement above, it is also evident that the process of family reunion continued over years and generations.

Along with family reunion, marriage was another frequent medium has been used by Sylhetis' to migrate to the UK. Before going any further, it is important to mention that people from Sylhet region strongly believe in getting married with the people within the same region. The belief again was because they have a very different dialect comparing other parts of Bangladesh. Moreover the food consumption pattern, culture is also significantly different from other parts of Bangladesh. So marriage within same families or relatives is very frequent within these particular communities. As mentioned by Gardner (1993), most of the primary migrants were single men working in East India Company ships. So it was a very common practice that time when those men went back to Sylhet, got married and bring them here as their spouse. Sometimes the process took very long, so those men used to go back frequently and finally bring families including children.

In the other hand, in nineties, the picture of migration of Sylheti community has changed. Now women who came with their parents as child required a bridegroom to marry. So *Bileti Puri* (British Bride) became a very desired and highly demanded option for unmarried Shyleti men to migrate in the UK. Two of my respondents came to the UK by getting married with British-Sylheti woman. As one of them states

*“Well, first of all I have say you are welcome. My name is..... I have come to this country in 1983. I was working in Saudi Arabia at that time. From Bangladesh I have started my career in Saudi Arabia. From there I married a British woman. From there I have come to this country in 1983”*

And most surprisingly this process of getting married and being migrated has become a chain over decades. Through this very process of family orientation the number of Bangladeshi population in the UK increased significantly during late eighties and early nineties.

As discussed, early part of Bangladeshi migration in the UK mostly dominated by Sylheti men and women. But after the mid-nineties, there was another group of

Bangladeshi migrants has emerged. They were mostly students and professionals want to enhance their knowledge through study and work experience. This group of migrants, which I have categorised as skilled-migrant eventually managed to integrate themselves into mainstream education and job fields. Although, the presence of skilled migrants has not been mentioned or acknowledged by any of the scholars, they are significantly prominent within the current Bangladeshi communities. Again there is tension with the community because of non-Shyleti presence within a Shyleti dominant community. The non-Sylheti group consists anyone from Bangladesh apart from Sylheti region. This group is more engaged in different cultural activities: celebration of Bengali national and religious festivals, music and media appearances. It was also found in the fieldwork that the majority of first generation migrants from Sylhet lack institutional education. On the other hand, migrants from other parts of Bangladesh initiated their positioning through cultural and education activities. Moreover, this skilled migrant group managed to strengthen their position politically and socially within the diaspora. Tulip Siddique, a non-Shyleti Bangladeshi migrant, who is serving as an MP, is an example of non-Shyleti presence with the community. Along side of social and political arena, non-Shyleti group is enhancing their presence in Business sector by opening new ventures with in the community. So the current picture shows an indication of sharing between Shyleti and non-Shyleti population within the group.

The research also unveiled the trans-nationality of Bangladeshi diaspora. There are big Bangladeshi communities living in Europe, Middle East and America. Some of the migration did not take place from the homeland directly. People living in another country moved to the UK for better lifestyle and opportunity of better career. There are a big number of people moved to the UK in recent years especially from various European countries because of better opportunities for education and living. As one my respondent mentioned:

*“Before coming here, I was in a different country for five/seven years. I was in Saudi Arabia for five years.... I used to work in air-conditioning”*

He continues,

*“As you know the life style in Middle-East is not as good as here in London. And also I didn’t want to go back to Bangladesh. I came here for better life and opportunity”*

Again the hope of return has found here as well. Even though they came in the UK for better life and opportunity, majority of them like to spend their last days back in Bangladesh. But obviously the tension between generations still here reflecting in my respondent’s response:

*“That’s a very good question. Now I have family here. My kids are growing here. I don’t know, I might go back to Bangladesh, settle there when I retire but I can’t tell for my children because they have taken this country as their own. I don’t know about them. I am for the time being here. I am working and have family but who knows may be when I retire I may go back to Bangladesh”.*

So some of the characteristics of diaspora are very prominent within Bangladeshi communities in the UK. Although colonization was the primary influencing factor for Bangladeshi migration in the UK, search for better life has boosted the number to a greater extent. Hence Safran’s (2005) argument of diaspora being a product of migration has significantly justified through the analysis of the formation of Bangladeshi diaspora.

#### 4.2. Food and religion:

The role of religion in food consumption has given particular importance in number of literatures. Similar picture has found in my research. Religion and religious practices have significant influence in food behavior of Bangladeshi communities. According to the 2001 Census, among 275,395 of Bangladeshi population in the UK 254,704 were reported as Muslim, which is consisting 92 per cent of the group. More over the number comprising 17 per cent of England’s Muslim population. Along with that most of the Bangladeshi population in the UK came from Sylhet, which is believed to be a sacred place for the Muslims. There was number of Muslim Saints spent time in Shylet leaving a very significant mark within the cultural and religious

life of the people from Sylhet region. It is also believed that the land in Sylhet region is very sacred and so is fertile. The crops and other agricultural products also believed to carry better quality and nutritional effect compare to the other parts of Bangladesh.

Muslim people follow certain religious restrictions when it comes to food consumption. They are not allowed to have food products contains alcohol and alcoholic ingredients. They are only allowed to have meat processed in a religious way. One of the respondents clarifies:

*“We usually go to a local butcher, it’s a Pakistani butcher. And they only do halal meats. Thats where we buy from. It’s a halal store so we know the animals have been sacrificed in a religious way. Now days its very common. You can find halal butchers everywhere”*

He continues:

*“I will do the halal (followed by Islamic rules) shopping, yeah, so like yesterday I did the halal shopping, when I say halal it means chicken, meat, lamb. And I also went to a Bangladeshi shop and got vegetables, got fish. So we will have fish even”.*

As mentioned by the respondent, the presence of halal meat store is very common now because of increased demand in recent days. But the picture was not same even before a decade, which has reflected in one of the respondent’s speech:

*“More products come now, before it was only one or two shops, price was high... now there are lots of shops... high competition, if you go to Shadwell, you can get so many shops, you can buy as you want... if you don’t like in one store, you can go to another. But before it was only one store and you buy everything from there. If you wanted to buy Halal products, you had only one or two store. It was very limited. Now it is not limited. You can get everything in supermarket now”*

It is important to note that, with the increase of demand for halal food, now one can buy halal meat from mainstream supermarkets e.g.: Tesco, Sainsburys. There

are also options available for halal ready meals in supermarkets. Obviously the demand is not only because of the increase of Bangladeshi Muslim population in the UK but also because of overall increase of Muslim population. Again, supermarkets are stocking particular ethnic and halal food especially in the areas where the presence of Muslim population is comparatively high.

Not only for household consumption, but also when they go out for dining, they prefer to go a halal restaurant. The option for halal restaurant is very much available now days. Among all foods, grill and kebabs are most favourite dishes among the group. One of them mentioned:

*We normally go to halal restaurants.*

Another respondent describes:

*“When we go out with my Bangladeshi friends, we tend go to an Asian restaurant where you can find curry or grill food. You can’t cook grill as other like Pakistani or Afghanistani does, so if you want proper grill you need to go to them”.*

Those Pakistani or Afghanistani restaurants resemble the integrity of selling halal food. So Muslim people like to go to those places to ensure they are not mistaken or miss-led to non-halal food. Although there are some exceptions where member of the group goes to mainstream restaurants and share mainstream food, the majorities are stick to the food guided by religion.

*“Sometimes we go to have Italian or English food. When I am out with my English friend, I go out and have English food. It really depends”.*

#### 4.3. Food at home:

About 60 per cent of Bangladeshi population in the UK was born in Bangladesh. They have spent some parts, mostly young age of their life in Bangladesh. So they were not able to change their food habit fully while living in the UK. In Bangladesh, people do not have much option to go for international cuisine

except few developed in recent years. So food at home in Bangladesh is mainly rice and curry, which is consumed as least twice a day. Similar picture has found in Bangladeshi families living here in the UK. Of course, there are exceptions in families where mostly the number of times of taking rice and curry has changed. In most families, rice and curry is being consumed once a day, even though some families still practice the same habit of having them twice. But regardless of number of time they consume, rice, fish, meat and vegetables are mostly consumed items in every home. One of the respondents describe:

*“Fish is another thing we have at home. Fish, I would say in a month we will have two or three times and its mostly chicken and lamb. We will have beans mostly cooked with fish, sometimes we will have fried fish. My wife sometimes cook sutki (dried fish), I don’t know if you know sutki, its habit of Sylheti, I am from Sylhet so this is dried fish. It smells when we cook it. Some people don’t like it. But for some reason I like it. That’s normally we have in rare occasion”*

The biggest change in food consumption pattern I have found in breakfast consumption. In Bangladesh, people have home made roti (bread) with sweet or vegetables, tea during the breakfast, which has replaced by mostly cereals, porridge and bread. One of the female respondents explained nicely how her habit of breakfast has changed:

*“We have cereals most of the times. Cereal, milk... this kind of food we have in breakfast.. sometimes bread... we have toast breads...”*

*Oh yes, In Bangladesh we used to have muri (dried rice), Cha (tea), biscuit.. We used to eat three times in Bangladesh”*

As food items in breakfast has changed, food at lunch remained same. It is the part of the day, most families filled up themselves with rice, various meat curries, fish, lentils and vegetables. One of the respondents explains their food habit:

*We eat lots of vegetables.... we prefer vegetables compare to other foods. But we eat fish as well.*

*We also cook meat or chicken..... Kids doesn't like fish or vegetables all the time. So for them we need to cook meat or chicken. But for us (older) we cook vegetables more. We also eat Shak (various kind of leaves)*

But the picture of nighttime meal is different compare to lunch within the families. Mainly because of medical conditions, some people avoid heavy food during the night. In some families, kids also avoid rice and curries during the night because of fear of obesity. Regardless of food items consumed, family mealtime has found one of the most significant times within the Bangladeshi family structure. During that time, members of the family engaged in various discussion and sharing including planning for holidays, social and political situations of the world. It is also found as fun time for family members. It helps every one of the families to come together, share their views and enhance bonding. A typical Bangladeshi family meal pictured as:

*“We bring everything on the table after cooking. We sit together then everyone eat whatever they like from the dishes. We normally have four or five items and they eat whatever they like. For example, my youngest son always eats one item. He never takes two. But elder son will eat two items. But rest of us eat four five items, we try everything, even in small portions”*

*“We discuss family matters or plan about going to relatives house or plan for holidays”.*

One of the noticeable fact has found in my research is ‘role of men in household cooking’. Most of the men I have interviewed contribute in cooking or do cooking very often to support their partners. One of the reason was identified is lack of time for women as they are engaged in job as well. This is very unlikely picture in Bangladesh. Even though, women work in Bangladesh, the cooking still belongs to them. It is important to mention that, in Bangladesh majority household has housemaid to help in cooking and other household works, which is out of imagination in the UK. So sharing in cooking between men and women has found very common with the families. One of the male members has described:

*“I normally cook Bangladeshi curries, which I like. But you know everyone have different taste. Sometimes I also ask my children what they like. And I cook according to their taste. Among our Bangladeshi traditional dishes, I mostly cook meat, fish and vegetables. Sometimes I even mix vegetables with meat. You can make numbers of curries by chicken. So I do variety of them”*

There are other reasons found as well in relation to men’s engagement in cooking. One of them is attachment of men in restaurant trade. There are big number of men within the community started their initial career at restaurant trade working as kitchen porter, chef or tandoori chef. Moreover, some of them still engaged in restaurant trade in various ways. So cooking has found as very comfortable task for them. In some cases men are found more skilled and expert in cooking because of their attachment with restaurants. One of my respondents who used to be a chef in an Indian restaurant mentioned:

*“Most of the time I cook chicken korma (sweet) as they like it. Sometimes if in hurry, I cook baby chicken bhuna (fried) with little sauce”*

From the findings it is very clear that food in home carries extensive value within family life. From engaging male and female members in cooking to bringing all members into same table, it creates ties the family together, which continues over generations.

#### 4.4. Food as celebration:

Among all family celebrations, Marriage is one of the most significant events within the Bangladeshi community. Within the given social structure, the merit of the celebration of a marriage determined through various factors. Among those factors, food is the most prominent instrument to determine how successful the event is. The number of food items is very crucial in this kind of ceremony. Additionally, the type of dish and quality of chef is also considerable. Families try to show their financial and social status through marriage celebration. There is also an underlined competition has found between bride and groom’s families through the celebration. Both parties are eager to prove their events more successful and superior then others.

One of my respondents elaborated about her preparation of her daughter's marriage ceremony:

*"We had my daughter's wedding last month. We did a fish curry rather than vegetable curry and everybody liked it. We want put something different. We did Bangladeshi style chicken roast rather than chicken tikka. Everybody liked the fish curry and it was my idea".*

So the idea of creating differentiation through food in a ceremony clearly exhibited on her comment. From her comment, it is also evident that food not only create differentiation within group but also create a feeling of liking or disliking. Hence the power of food in private and social structure has been manifested.

Along with personal and family celebrations, Bangladeshi as a nation has lots of national as well as religious festivals. Most of these festivals linked with various types of foods. From the religious perspective, Muslim people observe the month of Ramadan, which is time for self-control and self-restraint. During this month, Muslim people fast since sunrise to sunset and share food with the poor and others. Again there are some special foods, which are associated with the month of Ramadan. While finishing fasting, various types of juices, particularly yogurt, mango and *Ruh Afsa* (special kind of juice mix) can be found in every house. Fried onions, dried rice mixed with *chana* (type of lentils) are very common items consumed during the *Iftar* (time when fasting finishes). Eid-ul-Fitr is one of the biggest religious festivals comes after the month of Ramadan where every family cook special dishes including *biriyani* (rice cooked with meat), *firni* (rice pudding) and traditional sweets. It is very crucial to mention that, for majority of Bangladeshi Muslim families, religions festivals bear more significance compare to national festivals, which has outlined in one of my respondents statement:

*"I came from a Muslim background so two big festivals we have, we call them Eid-ul-fitr and Eid-ul Adha. Eid-ul-fitr is after the month of Ramadan, it's a big festival and that's a special festival, that's when we have lots of foods. We invite friends and relatives and we will have lots of Bangladeshi food cooking in home.*

*And then of course food in big festivals, which we call Eid ul Adha, you know mostly in Bangladesh they slaughter, sacrifices lot of cows, here they sacrifice lamb. That's when we will have lots of meat..... We will have a lots of pilau (rice cooked with spices), lot of curry. We will have chicken corma (special curry cooked with milk). You need remember in special occasions we have lots of korma”.*

Although there are some tension between secular and religious groups within the community, which has outlined by Eade and Garbin (2006), people of Bangladeshi communities also observe national celebrations with festivity. *Baishaki Mela*, (celebration of Bengali New Year) was challenged by many religious movements since its introduction in 1998, has passed number of years through vivid celebrations. Initially it used to be taking place in Brick Lane, now moved in Victoria Park near Mile End because increased number of visitors. It has become one of the most iconic celebrations for Bangladeshi communities in the UK. It is also the second highest gathering in London after Notting Hill Carnival. *Panta Ilish* (rice in water and Ilisha fish) is one of the items commonly consumed during the first day of Bengali New Year. Within this celebration Ilisha (national fish of Bangladesh) resembles the nationhood and it brings people from all class together. During this time of the year, families also make *pitha* (traditional cakes), *payes* (rice pudding) and share with friend and families.

From my research, it has also found that the increased number of Bangladeshi migrants also influenced the secular movements within the community. As the same respondent who also celebrate national festivals along with religious festivals described how national festivals bring culture and food together:

*“The other thing I have to tell you that even there are other festivals. That's not only Muslim festivals, being Bangladeshi we have different festivals, we call them Bengali festivals and these are when you have new year, Bengali new year, you will have lots of sweets. These are Bangladeshi sweets, they way they are prepared are fully Bangladeshi way. We will have those. We call them Rosgolla (special kind of sweet) and golapjamun. We will have them when we have Bengali festivals and I love them. I would say, our tradition is a rich tradition. You have all sorts of food. One thing I also like in festivals is biriyani (rice cooked with meat). Bangladeshi style*

*biriyani is different from Indian style and I like it. So in festivals we eat and cook lot of variety of food and we have a very rich culture of food”*

Apart from Muslim families, there are lots of Bangladeshi Hindus lives in London. Although the number is very low comparing Muslim population, they also celebrate various religious festivals including *Durga Puja*, *Kali Puja* and other religious festivals. Those festivals bring people from all groups where people share food and engage in cultural activities.

Additionally, there are numbers of cultural and social organisations representing various region of Bangladesh has started their activities over last few years. These organisations promote Bangladeshi music, language and culture. I was present in number of those events, where community members come along with their families, share and enjoy their time with others. Again, presence of food is obvious in those kinds of events. I have observed people bringing food from their home and shared with others. One of the most common features of these gathering is musical shows and dinner.

#### 4.5. Food and generation

In my interviews I have collected data from different generations. I interviewed two participants who were born and brought up in the UK. It helped me to identify their thoughts about Bangladeshi food, culture and also about their identities. More specifically, we discussed about food in home as well as outside. The conversations also initiated the influence of religion in food habit. Although there are some arguments, most of the UK born third or second-generation members follows the guidelines provided by the religion. Yes, there are some exceptions when they dine out or with friends enjoying time out of home, but within family atmosphere they mostly follow the rules of home. As one of the male respondents, works in central London described:

*“ It is difficult some times... you know. I like to eat halal all the time but what you will do when you are hungry and there is no halal place near you. Think of central London... how many places you can get halal... there are two places I know*

*which are halal.... It took me twenty minutes to walk in my break.... My break was finish... you know. Its not easy”*

Again the picture of home eating is very much similar for those young generations. Most of them were grown up with rice and curry, which regularly cooked in their homes. Chicken has found as the most consumed and liked by the young generations as they found them easy to eat. They prefer not to eat fish, which is full of bones. One of finding is very important to mention here that their views or likings are given preferences by their parents or family members. Even though most of their parents like fish, rice and spicy curries, they cooked for their children separately, which has described by one the female respondent, mother of five kids:

*“We also cook meat or chicken..... Kids doesn't like fish or vegetables all the time. So for them we need to cook meat or chicken. But for us (older) we cook vegetables more. We also eat Shak (various kind of leaves)”*

The choice of children in food consumption has also been echoed in one the male respondent:

*“I normally cook Bangladeshi curries, which I like. But you know everyone have different taste. Sometimes I also ask my children what they like. And I cook according to their taste. Among our Bangladeshi traditional dishes, I mostly cook meat, fish and vegetables. Sometimes I even mix vegetables with meat. You can make numbers of curries by chicken. So I do variety of them”*

However, the young generation was found more health conscious compare to their parents and older members of the community. They prefer food with less carbohydrate and fat ingredients. Obviously, it has been possible because of the availability of the information in food products, which are accessible to consumers. It is also believed by the young people that eating too much rice and curries will make them slow and sleepy at work, as it was mentioned by a respondents, works in a primary school:

*“I mostly have cereals in breakfast... it helps me keep going. If I have heavy breakfast I can't work. I feel heavy and sleepy. Same for the lunch....I have sandwiches, quick meals during the break....yeah... but in the night I eat full in home”*

Again, the female members of young generation have found to be interested with cooking. But they like to do experiments and create fusion with traditional foods. Most of them learnt cooking from their mother or older female member of the family. As they mentioned, there are number of recopies and videos of cooking available in YouTube and they like to implement that when they cook. There were sense of responsibilities were found in the voice of young generation as one the member described how they help their parents and support them in cooking:

*“ We are three sisters. So we share responsibilities. We do food shopping weekly and also help my mum in cooking. We do weekly. Like this week I am doing all the shopping and cooking help....next week will be my elder sister. We are also thinking to give my mum off for month from cooking...next time when we have summer holidays.... We will send her Bangladesh for long holidays....she is very happy.”*

Again, the shared responsibilities allow children to learn traditional cooking and carry the culture to next generations. There are some exceptions among them as all of them does not like or can adopt the culture in a similar manner. But the acceptance of traditional Bangladeshi food and cooking has found among most of the young generation men and women, which also reflected in the following respondent's statement:

*“They accept that. But not all of them can do the same. My oldest daughter can cook exactly like me. She learnt all of them. Second of then can do some of the dishes but not all. Same goes to my third daughter. She can do as well”.*

#### 4.6. Food and Heath education

As evident from the study, there are some significant changes in the food consumption pattern within Bangladeshi communities although the consumption of rice and curries remains high. From all identified reasons, health awareness is the most influencing factor in changing food habit. For older people foods are divided into two categories: strong and weak food. All types of meats, fish belongs to strong food and vegetables, bread and fruits belong to weak food. Moreover, heavy consumption of meat and fish also resonates the richness and ability of families. Again this culture of showing richness through food has been accompanied with them from their homeland Bangladesh. But the picture has changed dramatically over generations and sometimes even with the first generation migrants, who spent most of their life in Bangladesh. They understand the risk in consumption of too much rice and meat as most of them suffer from diabetic and high blood pressure. So they were sometimes forced to change their food pattern, particularly the trend of eating spicy foods. They even reduced the amount of rice they used to eat because of health issues, which has found in one of my respondent's statement:

“We only eat rice once.. during mid-day. In the morning we have break fast then rice in lunch and at the night we have chapatti (bread)... because of diabetics...”

She continued:

*“We take cereals as milk is available here.... and because of Gastric problems....diabetic issues... sugar level gets high.... but in Bangladesh because of heat and sweat, we never had problems. In this country, you won't have sweat. Whatever you eat kept in stock inside body”.*

When older people changed their food habit because of health issues, young population consider healthy food, as they want to stay fit and healthy. One of the mothers mentioned:

*“Yes they do. But sometimes don't like to do that as well. They don't like to do too many items. They want to do one or two items. They tell me cook less items otherwise they will eat more rice and get fatter; children think that way”*

Again, access to health education, media circulation helped parents and children to understand differences between various food ingredients, their benefits and effects. Access to health education was not been so frequent in Bangladesh, especially in Sylhet, from where most of the member of this community came from. But after migrated in the UK, this population benefitted from the government and community health services. One of the parents describe how he found about health issues in some food items consumed by his children:

“My kids like burgers, fried chicken and chips. So they bring that home sometimes. But recently I found, these food especially fast food are not good for children’s health. So I prefer to bring grill for them, which doesn’t contain oil. I like sandwiches as well. For example I found Subway sandwiches are good. Full of salads and no oil on that”

And he also mentioned how he changed his cooking pattern because of his learning of healthy food:

*“Yes. Even sometimes I prepare boiled vegetables for my kids. I steam carrots, cauliflower, broccoli and potato. Then I put some salads on that and had our dinner...”*

*I have learnt those from dieticians. As me and my wife has diabetics, we have to maintain certain food habit. We need to follow the advise of dieticians regularly”*

#### 4.7. Food shopping

Food shopping is closely associated with food preparation and consumption. In parallel to traditional Bangladeshi foods, there are some designated shopping places where Bangladeshi people go to get their desired products. Obviously the number of Bangladeshi food products and shops were very limited during the period of initial migration. But with the increased number of population, the number of shops and supplies became higher and highly competitive, which was nicely elaborated by one of my respondents:

*“...now every moment Bengali people are increasing in number also we can get all Bengali products. Before we used to get limited products... fish was limited*

*here but now everything is available as per demand.... Vegetables are available as well.*

*We used to go to Quality food in Cannon Street, it was a very small shop that time....now it is very big... you can get everything now. All kinds of sour fruits.... dry fish, pickles, and others... mango pickles as well... sometimes Satkora (a local fruits, Sylheti people use in cooking)”.*

She also mentioned:

*“More products come now, before it was only one or two shops, price was high... now there are lots of shops... high competition, if you go to Shadwell, you can get so many shops, you can buy as you want... if you don't like in one store, you can go to another. But before it was only one store and you buy everything from there. If you wanted to buy Halal products, you had only one or two store. It was very limited. Now it is not limited. You can get everything in supermarket now”.*

As mentioned in her statement, Shadwell (situated in East London) is one of the most famous places among the Bangladeshi population for food shopping. Along with Shadwell, Whitechapel, Ilford, Upton Park have number of shops and day market full with Bangladeshi food products. Moreover, with the ease of communication system, the availability of Bangladeshi fish has been increased over last decades. Interestingly, even though women were found to be the in-charge of kitchen and cooking, the shopping mostly belongs to male members of the society. Again making the list of shopping belongs to women, which was nicely said by one of the male respondent:

*“That's a very good question. Shopping, the list, my wife will do the list as she is the cook and I will go and do the shopping. So I will do the halal (followed by Islamic rules) shopping, yeah, so like yesterday I did the halal shopping, when I say halal it means chicken, meat, lamb. And I also went to a Bangladeshi shop and got vegetables, got fish”*

From the statement it is also evident the influence of religion is also present in food shopping. As a member of Muslim community, they maintain the religious

obligations and source food item from designated food stores. Even though some of the supermarket chains e.g.: Tesco, Sainsburys came forward and stock Bangladeshi and *halal* food products, most of the people of the community still depends on local and traditional Bangladeshi stores.

#### 4.8. Food and Bangladeshi identity:

Determining the relationship between food and identity was one of the objectives of the study. So I have number of conversations with each participant regarding their identity. And surprisingly strong relationship between Bangladeshi food and identity has found in my study. The sense of ‘Bangladeshiness’ was found in all participants’ comments. Again the sense is stronger for the first or second generation respondents as most of them spent a large part of their life in Bangladesh. It is very crucial to mention here that majority of the second generation Bangladeshis’ spent some part of their life in Bangladesh although their parents used to live in the UK. It was mainly because of early male migrants used to live and work in the UK but got married while visiting in Bangladesh and left their wife and children there. Sometimes it took long time for them to bring their families here. Similar picture has found where female member of the group got married to a man living in Bangladesh and spent some time there before their family migrated to the UK. Furthermore, these members of the group have orientation with Bangladeshi food, which they continued to carry on while living in the UK. So the sense of Bangladeshi identity has travelled through food practices as it was mentioned by one of the respondents:

*“Yeah being an Bangladeshi, its my identity, its my food, what I eat. I eat my Bangladeshi food with my finger and hand, its always this connection. You feel for Bangladesh, isn’t it? When you eating anything Bangladeshi, vegetables, curry or anything, I always feel my mum used to cook like this, very tasty. My mum or grandmother used to cook like this. So there is a connection. This is food, they way we food, it is our identity”*

From the above statement, the strong relationship between food habit and identity has manifested. Food habit allowed this particular respondent to remember his mother and grandmother. He also established the fact that food can carry

memories. Again by mentioning eating by 'finger and hand', he reflected the habit and cultural traditions, which he carried from his childhood. Similar passion for Bangladesh has found in another female respondent although she did not ignore her identity as British. While describing her childhood memories and Bangladesh, she stated:

*"I remember too much. I have grown up in Bangladesh. My children remember less but we missed a lot.*

*I live in this country so I am British, but I feel more Bangladeshi. My father came here so we had to chance to come here and enjoy better life and opportunities but always remember Bangladesh. I never forget Bangladesh".*

As illustrated in early literatures (Gardner, 2002; Eade and Garbin, 2006), a sense of hybrid identity has found among young generation Bangladeshis' in the UK. Surprisingly, they are more associated with their religious identity compared to their national identity. Most of them identified themselves as 'British-Bangladeshi' or 'Muslim' rather than only 'British'. Regardless of their expression towards identity, none of the young participants showed their negligence to their origin. Moreover they expressed their interest visiting Bangladesh as they found it more open, green and simple. Also the food practice in home allow young population to have orientations to Bangladeshi foods, which also helps reinforcing Bangladeshi identity among them. As one of the young female member mentioned:

*"I am British-Bangladeshi. I born and brought up here but my parents were from Bangladesh. My dad born there.... But my Mum born here. But she knows all Bangladesh cooking. She learnt from my grandmother. We eat fish and rice in home... but I cant eat too much spicy..."*

She also mentioned:

*"I learnt cooking as well. But my elder sister is better than me... she can cook like my Mum.... I always miss something... too many spices.. but I enjoy. My Mum wants us to learn Bangladeshi cooking".*

While observing *Baishakhi Mela*, the presence of young population was noticeable. They were enjoying traditional Bengali music, food and cultural activities. I have also found a lot of young people engaged in food-oriented trades i.e.: restaurants, street food markets and ethnic food shops. Besides their participation in food business, they also provide supports to their parents in food shopping, which were mentioned by one of the respondents. Again, these kinds of family and public food orientations help young population to gain practical knowledge about their traditional food products. So as evident from the study, it can be justified that diasporic identity created, maintained and reinforced through cultural traditions and food practices within a diasporic context.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

### 5.1. Conclusion

This research was investigative in nature and is limited to the examination of participants view. So there was no purpose to generalise the final results derived from the data collected. Moreover the findings presented in the study are clear views of the respondents. In-depth interview and observation were used as methods to gather data and observe participants attitude, which appear to be successful in fulfilling research objectives.

Bangladeshi population is comparatively smallest among all South Asian presence in the UK. In the other hand, it is the second largest Muslim communities in Britain constituting more than ninety per cent of the group. Although half of the population live within London region, the group has strong presence in other major cities in the UK including Birmingham, Luton, Manchester and Oldham. The community belong to a rich cultural heritage, which originated from Bangladesh, formerly Indian Subcontinent. Same as Bangladesh, religion has very strong influence on people's private and social life. The first generation Bangladeshi population in the UK still show strong feeling for Bangladesh and stay tuned through participation in political and social activities concerning Bangladesh. In contrast, young population find themselves more into a part of wider community, which is British-Bangladeshi along with their membership of world Muslim community. Attachments toward Bangladeshi culture and heritage have also found less influential among young members of the group although they do not ignore their past and carry a very soft feeling for Bangladesh. Women's positioning in the society is widely different from men, as they do not find themselves in social or political activities concerning Bangladesh, so rather associate themselves with Islamic traditions.

The socio-economic condition of the community is comparatively below the desired standard. Lack of education, unemployment and scarcity of adequate housing positioned the group among some of the most deprived communities in the UK. Obviously, there are number of example has found in the study where young population engaging themselves in mainstream education and career, the rate of religious affiliations among the population is still very high. Again many scholars have identified this religious affiliation to be linked with socio-economic deprivation.

By supporting the argument, this study also identified other factors including unwillingness of mainstream education, availability of government benefits and religious influences are to be the major concern for this particular community. Additionally the community is very keen to keep constant relation to their home culture and heritage while they feel themselves well ingrained within the mainstream culture and community.

The research has provided significant evidence supporting the social theory that person's identity is very crucial because of its ability to transform a person into a group. It has also indicated the importance of identity in conjunction to how cultural aspects are perceived among the group members. Some degree of differences was found when identity was explained by two different generations within the group, which also determines the influence of host culture among the migrants. Member of first generation were found to be stricter to their own ethnic and religious cultures, values and traditions, which has predicted in various literatures (Burton, 1996). On the other hand, second generation found in holding a hybrid identity: British-Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi and in some extent Muslim, which again reflects Greeley's (1971) theory of host culture's influence on second-generation migrants. In conclusion, the outcomes provide substantial evidence for group's attachment with their ethnic identity.

Furthermore, the conclusions also highlighted the fact that each generation carrying the cultural values of their ethic origin in certain degrees, which is identified as the key factor to influence their identity. The first generation Bangladeshi population displayed a strong degree of coherence with their home culture because of their long maintained relationship with the home country. Following the same trend,

members of second generation also showed a very similar attitude towards their ethnic culture as most of them spent majority of their life in Bangladesh. In contrast, third generation Bangladeshi population showed a mixed attitude towards their ethnic culture because of reduced connections with Bangladesh. The reason is also pointed towards the failure of the families to pass their cultural traditions and heritage onto the next generations.

The research has spotted the significance of identity and cultural traditions to be the major factor for the group's food consumption pattern. Family traditions and inter family relationship strongly influence food consumption in personal level and sometimes towards the social gatherings. In addition to that, national celebrations and traditions also have substantial influence on food behaviour of the group. But above all, religion stayed at the high end to influence, maintain and sometimes control group's food choice. Again in some cases, all types of influences were found to be marginalised as a few member of the group found themselves ingrained with British culture. But the number is very low to generalise, can be describe as exception only.

It can also be concluded that, since the period of early migration, first generation Bangladeshi population restricted themselves to their ethnic culture, food and cooking. They found to be more reluctant to try and eat mainstream British food regularly although exceptions were found in the case of people with diabetic and other health issues. The food habit of second generation found to be little flexible, again mainly because of health concerns. Consequently, the consumption pattern of young generation is found to be mix and sometimes more amenable to British culture because of health education and awareness. But regardless of pattern, food consumption has found be a strong basis of ethnic identity and can significantly influence self-identity and group identities.

To sum up, with the growth of diaspora communities including Bangladeshi groups in the UK created opportunities for sociologists to look into existing diaspora groups from different angles. Study of diaspora food and culture were the most neglected areas of diaspora studies. But from this particular study, it is very much clear that studies on diaspora cannot be fulfilled without understanding the culture and food practices of diaspora groups. Diaspora culture also creates opportunities for

sociologists in creating long-term relationship with diaspora groups by acknowledging their food behaviour and traditions. Additionally, the research also unveiled the lack of understanding among sociologists of the influence of identity on groups' food patterns. It is evident in the research that first and second generation Bangladeshis' tend to choose Bangladeshi foods on various national celebrations, such as *Pahela Baishakh*. This establishes the strong role of identity on people's food consumption and vice-versa. In conclusion, there is substantial evidence to support for food's ability to determine cultural identity.

There was clear indication to prove that all respondents are well informed about Bangladeshi culture and traditions. Regardless of generations, they know where they came from and try to keep sustainable relations with their origin. Most of them visit to Bangladeshi very often and some of them regularly. The young generation however, whilst utilitarian of their culture and heritage, found to be integrated and adopting host culture to a certain extent. Again this integration does not take them away from their own culture because of their strong religious belief. Furthermore, the research indicated that majority of the respondents concerned about food related health issues and so that they integrate healthy option towards their traditional foods.

To conclude, all respondents showed their emotional bond for Bangladeshi culture and traditions. Similarly, having Bangladeshi food in their meal reveal their solidarity towards ethnic identity. Hence, the relationship between food, culture and identity within diaspora is unenviable for a tangible diaspora study.

## 5.2. Recommendations:

The following academic recommendations rose from the interviews with the respondents and from the observation process:

- Islam and its religious impact on food as well as social behaviour of Bangladeshi communities in the UK.
- A detailed research of 'kitchen' as a space for women and traditional transformations towards generation.

- Role of women in food consumption behaviour and food purchase decision within family structure.
- Detailed research of experiences and expectations towards ethnic identity among young population.

And

- A further research across broader Muslim diaspora in the UK in relation to issues with Islamic identity.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1. Letter 1: Draft letter/e-mail to prospective participants.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently undertaking a dissertation for my MA in The University of Kent. I would be grateful if you would be willing to be interviewed, at a time and place convenient to you as part of that research. Your participation would be most helpful to my research and would be entirely voluntary.

#### **Title of Research:**

**Food, diaspora and identity: A case study of Bangladeshi families in East London**

I can confirm that:

- The Ethic's Committee of Management School has approved this project.
- With your permission the discussion and interview will be recorded.
- A transcript of the interview will be sent to you after the session if you require.
- Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation. Nor will any data be used from the session that might identify you to a third party.
- You will be free to withdraw from the research at anytime and/or request that your transcript not be used.
- A copy of the research information will be sent to you before the actual session.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me with my research. If you have any queries concerning the nature of the research or are unclear about the extent of your involvement in it please contact me at [skb30@kent.ac.uk](mailto:skb30@kent.ac.uk) or 0044(0) 7712226914.

Finally, I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Surjya Bhattacharjee

MA in Sociology

School of Social Policy and Social Research

University of Kent

## Appendix 2. Letter 2: Agreement to Participate

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the researcher from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the interview session being facilitated by *Surjya Bhattacharjee*. I have had the opportunity to ask the facilitator any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the facilitator of this decision. In appreciation of my time given to this session I am aware that the participation will be voluntary.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics Committee at the University of Kent.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Witness

### **Appendix 3. Template Questionnaire:**

- How long they have been living in the UK?
- Does they live with family or own?
- What kind of food they eat at home?
- Reason for particular food practice.
- Who does food shopping/preparation at home?
- Description of family meal.
- Any tradition of family meal.
- Does they eat outside?
- What kind of food they eat out?
- Difference between eating home and outside (taste and other issues)
- Does they visit to Bangladesh?
- How often they visit to Bangladesh?
- What are their thoughts about their identity?
- Any relationship between food habit and identity.

#### Appendix 4. Participant's details

Name of Participants	Age	Gender	Address	Interview date
Javed Ali	47	Male	London Borough of Barking	10/11/2014
Shamima khan	45	Female	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	09/05/2015
Abbas Miah	39	Male	London Borough of Newham	14/06/2015
Mohammad Ali	37	Male	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	21/06/2015
Mamun Sikdar	42	Male	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	28/06/2015
Jamila Begum	21	Female	London Borough of Newham	12/07/2015
Farhana Akhter	22	Female	London Borough of Tower Hamlet	23/08/2015
Farhana Akhter	29	Female	London Borough of Newham	12/12/2015

- To keep confidentiality the names used are fictitious.

## Appendix 5. Photographs of observation



Photograph: Baishakhi Mela food shop (Victoria Park, London, 17 May 2015)



Photograph: Baishakhi Mela (Victoria Park, London, 17 May 2015)



Photograph: Food sharing in Baishakhi Mela (17 May 2015)



Photograph: Traditional Bangladeshi foods during Pahela Baishakh (first day of Benglai new year). Foods included fish, bharta (smashed fish and potato), rice and lentils.

Photograph 1: The area before market open



Photograph : Whitechapel Street Market before open



Photograph: Temporary shop building materials (Whitechapel Street Market)



Photograph: Temporary shop building materials (Whitechapel Street Market)



Photograph: Permanent shops on the north side of the market (Whitechapel Street Market)



Photograph: Vegetable and fruit shop: From top left- *carrots*, *green/red chillies*, *Potol* (Bangladeshi vegetable), *green mango* and *orange*. (Shadwell Food Market)



Photograph: Vegetable and fruit shop 2: Front left- *Mula* (Bangladeshi vegetable). In packets- *tomatoes*, *potatos*, *green chillies*, *lau* (Bangladeshi vegetable) and *Lebu* (Bangladeshi vegetable) etc. (Whitechapel Food Market)



Photograph: Fish shop- Pangas (Bangladeshi fish), chapila (Bangladeshi fish), boal (Bangladeshi fish), bailla (Bangladeshi fish) and also Mackerel fish (Shadwell Food Market)



Photograph 8: Bangladeshi Vegetables: *Dheros*, *Green mango* (Shadwell Food Market)



Photograph: Whitechapel street market



Photograph: The market in front of Whitechapel station (permanent shops: north side)



Photograph: Spices used for cooking (Respondent's kitchen)



Photograph: Food stock in respondent's home (as presented as shop)



Photograph: Freeze full of meat and fish (Respondent's kitchen)



Photograph: Preparation for gardening (Bangladeshi vegetables plant)



Photograph: Food offered to during the interview (Respondent's home)



Photograph: Asian and Halal food section in Superstore (Tesco)