

# Unit 11

## Diaspora

### Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you will–

- know what the term ‘diaspora’ means.
- some of the great diaspora in the world history.
- identify some of the diasporic communities.
- understand the reason of diaspora in the recent time.

### Overview

Lesson 1: What is Diaspora?

Lesson 2: 'Banglatown' in East London

Lesson 3: Bangladeshis in Italy

Lesson 4: Bangladeshi Community in the UK

### Answer Key

## Lesson I : What is Diaspora?



### 1. Warm-up activity:

- What do you see in the pictures?
- The Merriam-Webster online dictionary provides the definition of 'Diaspora' in the following way:
  - a. the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland
  - b. people settled far from their ancestral homelands
  - c. the place where these people live
- Which parts of the world do Bangladeshis tend to settle in nowadays?
- Discuss with your friends whether it is possible to call such settlements the result of Bangladeshi diasporas of our time.



### 2. Read the passage and then carry out the activities that follow:

The term 'diaspora' is used to refer to people who have left their homelands and settled in other parts of the world, either because they were forced to do so or because they wanted to leave on their own. The word is increasingly used for such people as a collective group and/or a

community. The world has seen many Diasporas but scholars have been studying the phenomenon with great interest only in recent decades.



Among the great diasporas of history is that of the Jewish people, who were forced to leave their lands in ancient times. The movement of Aryans from Central Europe to the Indian sub-continent thousands of years ago is also a noteworthy diaspora, although the causes of this diaspora are unclear. In twentieth century history, the Palestinian diaspora has attracted a lot of attention and been a cause of concern for world leaders because of the plight of Palestinians. There have been massive diasporas in Africa, too, over the centuries, either because of war or because of the ravages of nature. But the chief reason why the phenomenon of diaspora is attracting so much attention now is globalization.

**3. Guess the meanings of the words in Column A from the context and match them with the meanings given in Column B:**

Column A	Column B
a. settled	i. occurrence
b. community	ii. significant
c. noteworthy	iii. moved to
d. ravages	iv. negative effects
e. phenomenon	v. group of people



**4. Answer the following questions:**

- Are all diasporas voluntary?
- If all diasporas are not voluntary, why would a group of people want to leave their country?
- When has the study of diasporas started to attract scholars?
- What are some of the major diasporas of the past?
- What has globalization to do with diasporas?

**5. Put the following words/phrases in a chronological order:**

- over the centuries
- twentieth century
- recent decades
- now
- ancient times
- thousands of years ago

- Now make a sentence with each of these words/phrases.
- Can you think of some other words/phrases that are used in English writing to mark time?

**6. Write a paragraph of about 150 words on people you know or have read about who have moved from Bangladesh to other parts of the world in recent years.****7. Answer each of the following questions in one word:**

- What would be the noun form for someone who has settled in a new world?
- What is the plural form of 'phenomenon'?
- What part of speech is 'massive' in the phrase 'massive diasporas'?
- Can you think of some other words that can substitute for 'although' in line 8 of the passage?
- What is the simple present form of 'is attracting'?

**Lesson 2: 'Banglatown' in East London****1. Warm-up activity:**

- What do you see in the picture?
- Can you guess which country's picture it is?
- Can we call the movement of groups of people from Bangladesh in recent decades a diaspora? Where do these Bangladeshis like to settle? Which parts of Bangladesh have been characterized by the departure of such groups and what are the reasons why people have left these parts?



2. Read the following extract taken from NazliKibria's book, *Muslims in Motion: Islam and National Identity in the Bangladeshi Diaspora*. Then attempt to answer the questions that follow either by responding to your classroom teacher in English or by trying to write down answers to them in your notebook.

### 'Banglatown' in East London

British-Bangladeshis, also known as British-Bengalis, are an important part of the Bangladeshi diaspora or those of Bangladeshi origin who are living abroad. Almost half of all British-Bangladeshis live in London, especially in the East London boroughs, of which Tower Hamlets has the highest concentration.



Today a tourist who is new to London may well decide to make her way over to the East End of the city, to visit 'Banglatown'. After exiting the Tube Station there she might follow the signs that point to Brick Lane, a street that has gained certain notoriety from Monica Ali's best-selling novel of the same name, which was also made into a movie. She may decide to try out one of the many Bangladeshi restaurants she sees there for lunch. Sitting at one of the tables with a window onto the street, she might notice that the street signs are not just in English but also in Bengali. And the lamp-posts are in green and red - the colors of the Bangladeshi flag. In fact everywhere she looks, she finds visual cues of the Bangladeshi, and even more specifically, the Sylheti presence in the area. Storefronts advertise flights from London to Sylhet, some on Bangladesh Biman (the national airline of Bangladesh) and others on Air Sylhet, a private airline company formed by British Bangladeshis. There is a sign for Sonali Bank - the major state-owned commercial bank of Bangladesh. There is a food store advertising frozen fish from Sylhet's Surma River. She watches two elderly men with long, grey beards enter the store; they are dressed in long white tunics, baggy pants and white head caps. She sees a group of teenage 20 girls walking down the street in animated conversation. One is dressed in a black burkah and the others are in jeans and long shirts, along with bright sequined hijabs on their heads. Looking through her London guidebook, she reads about how this neighbourhood is in 'Banglatown'.

In 2001 British Bangladeshi leaders, including many of the second-generation activists, led a successful bid via the Tower Hamlets council to gain the official designation of 'Banglatown' for Brick Lane and its surrounding neighbourhoods. With the help of street signs and an advertising campaign, the hope was to give the area a distinct cultural identity that would be attractive to tourists and thus beneficial for Bangladeshi businesses located there. In fact the area has a number of visible Bangladeshi landmarks, such as Altab Ali Park, the Kobi Nazrul Cultural Centre and the Shohid Minar Monument.



Along with the official designation of Banglatown, these landmarks are matters of considerable pride for many British Bangladeshis, symbols of their hard-won presence and political voice in Britain.



**3. Write down what you have guessed about the meaning of each of the following words from the context in which they have been used:**

- a. origin
- b. borough
- c. concentration
- d. notoriety
- e. cues
- f. tunics
- g. bid
- h. distinct
- i. landmark
- j. hard-won

**Now consult a dictionary or search Google for the words to see if you have correctly guessed the meanings of the word.**

**4. Discuss the following questions with members of your group. Carry on the discussion in English as far as possible:**

- a. Where do most British-Bangladeshis live?
- b. How and why did Brick Lane gain 'notoriety'?
- c. What is the name of Monica Ali's novel and the film made based on it?
- d. What are some signs and symbols of Bangladesh to be found in the Brick Lane area?
- e. How did the area come to be known as 'Banglatown'?
- f. What are some of the landmarks that reflect the pride of British-Bangladeshis about their identity as Bangladeshis?

**5. Which of the following statements seem to be false and which one true? Write 'T' or 'F' after each statement to register your response:**

- a. Most Bangladeshis in Britain live outside London.
- b. Everywhere in Brick Lane, one sees evidence of the high percentage of Bangladeshis from Sylhet who live in the area.
- c. Bangladeshis in Brick Lane lack confidence in their future.
- d. There was no business motive in the drive to make the Brick Lane area known as 'Banglatown'.
- e. Bangladeshis have made their presence felt in Britain through hard work.

**6. Answer each of the questions in about 300 words in your notebook:**

- a. Why would a tourist in London want to visit Banglatown and what would be its main attraction for him or her?
- b. Who are the customers of the shops, restaurants and business offices in Banglatown?
- c. Are there other Bangladeshi diasporas that are comparable in size and vitality to Banglatown that you know about?
- d. What connection does the economy of Banglatown have with that of Bangladesh?

**7. Answer the following:**

- a. 'origin' (line 2) is used in the passage as a noun; what would be its verb form?
- b. Is 'especially' (line 3) used as an adjective or an adverb?
- c. 'best-selling novel' (line 8) is a phrase where 'best-selling' is used as an ..... to modify 'novel'.
- d. 'advertise' (line 14) is a verb; its noun would be - .
- e. 'animated' (line 21) is used as an adjective; what would its adverb form be?

## Lesson 3: Bangladeshis in Italy

### 1. Warm-up activity:

- Think about life in foreign countries. Is it very exciting or painful or both?
- Discuss how and why in recent times Bangladeshis have gone abroad to seek a new life for themselves.



2. Read the following passage by Ihtisham Kabir and then attempt the activities that follow:

### Bangladeshis in Italy

Last month, a 20-year dream came true: we visited Italy. While it was an amazing lesson in history, I was also taken by surprise at the Bangladeshis in Italy. I heard estimates of between 200,000 and 600,000 Bangladeshis in Italy.

I saw them in Rome, Florence and Venice (but not in Siena.) The ones I saw all had small to medium-size businesses. In Rome, they were selling handbags, sunglasses and tourist material on the streets. In Florence, we walked into a store selling 'Indian-looking' things - a 'monohoridokan' - only to find the owner was a Bangladeshi who had a chain of these stores in the city.

In Venice, they were selling trinkets-like little puppets made from balloons - on the Accademia Bridge and in San Marco Square. One seller told me these would not sell in Rome, but in Venice the tourists buy them.



They were incredibly kind and polite to us. The person in Florence-much

to our protestations-treated us with cokes and ice cream, and sold things to us at large discounts. When it came to prices, they said "Pay us what you want-we are so happy to see a Bangladeshi tourist here." It was a kind of haggling in reverse. One street vendor in Rome, after selling a sunglass at 18 Euro to a European person, turned around and sold me a similar sunglass at 4.5 Euro. I wanted to pay him more, but, incredible as it seems, he would not take it. I think this barely covered his cost.



## HSC Programme

At a mini-flea-market of Bangladeshi stalls at the Tiburtina station in Rome, I fell into a discussion of the business. It costs them 1000-2000 Euros a month to rent each stall.

The work is very hard, and they live frugally. So they are able to save some money which they send home.

One seller in Venice said he can save up to Euro 1000 a month, but only if a lot of conditions are met (e.g. he has to sell an average of 50 Euros' worth daily; his food expenses cannot exceed Euro 80/month, etc.)

I was inspired by their entrepreneurship and touched by their generosity and hope their Diaspora comes true soon.

Here is a stall at the mini-flea market outside Tiburtina:



### 3. Guess the meanings of the words in Column A from the context and match them with the meanings given in Column B:

Column A	Column B
amazing	hard to believe
chain of stores	surprising
protestation	a set of shops
incredible	economically
frugally	complaints
entrepreneurship	owning business
generosity	go beyond
exceed	a market set out dress that sells second hand or cheap goods
the market	kindness



**4. Answer the following questions:**

- a. Which cities in Italy do the Bangladeshis mainly live?
- b. What was the author's dream and what did he expect to see in Italy?
- c. How was the author treated by the expatriate Bangladeshis?
- d. What are some of the occupations of the Bangladeshis living in Italy?
- e. How was the author treated by the expatriate Bangladeshis? Why do the emigrants save money?
- f. What kind of bargaining took place between the author and some of these Bangladeshis?
- g. What kind of savings do these Bangladeshis make and what do they do with them?

**5. Read the following statements and write 'T' if a statement is true and 'F' if it is false. In case of false statements, correct the information.**

- a. The author was not impressed by Italy's history.
- b. The Bangladeshis the author met were big businessmen.
- c. These Bangladeshis treated the author as they would do other customers.
- d. The Bangladeshis he met were delighted to meet the author.
- e. The Bangladeshi businessmen he met often sold him goods at low prices.
- f. The author was deeply moved by his experience of meeting Bangladeshis in Italy.

**6. What do the following idioms and phrases mean?**

- a. taken by surprise
- b. haggling in reverse
- c. estimates of
- d. fell into a discussion of
- e. if conditions were met
- f. turned around

**7. Convert the following into present tense:**

- a. was an amazing lesson
- b. was taken by surprise
- c. were selling
- d. had a chain of stores
- e. treated us with
- f. would not take

## Lesson 4: Bangladeshi Community in the UK



### 1. Warm-up activity:

- In the preceding lessons, we have looked at the lives of diasporic Bangladeshis in Brick Lane and Italy; the following passage, adapted from an academic essay by Tanzina Chowdhury, is about the history of Bangladeshi migration to UK. Read it and then carry out the activities that follow:



### 2. Read the following text and answer the questions that follow:

#### **Bangladeshi Community in the UK**

Migration from Bangladesh to Britain started in the 1930s and was predominantly a Sylheti phenomenon. Men of this particular geographical area employed by the British ship companies first started the process of migration. These men were largely illiterate and belonged to the landless peasantry. After the World War II, due to labor shortages, British government encouraged labor migration from its former colonies. The postwar British economy demanded cheap and plentiful labor, much of which was recruited from South Asia. Since Sylhet had

already forged a strong link with the UK, most new labor was drawn from there. Sylhetis, based in the UK, helped each other to integrate into the new society by providing credit, arranging documents, and gradually spreading the network. During the 1950s, the numbers increased dramatically. However, along with people from poorer backgrounds, a small number of urban upper and middle class Bangladeshis also migrated even before the World War II for higher education and settled in the UK.

According to the 2001 census, 283,063 Bangladeshis lived in the UK, which is 0.5 percent of the total population. In Britain, they are primarily concentrated in Greater London and the third generation of Bangladeshi population, those 'born and bred' in Britain, constitute half of the community. The largest Bangladeshi population outside London is located in Oldham, and the others are scattered across Birmingham, Luton and Bradford. British Bangladeshis are predominantly Muslims. Studies reveal that the second and the third generation Bangladeshis seem to uphold their Muslim identity rather than their identity as Bangladeshis.

However, the absence of a strong tie does not mean that the Bangladeshi community is completely detached from their homeland. In the era of globalization and social networking, like other diaspora communities, British Bangladeshis are also linked to their countries of origin by phone, mail, Internet and television. By the virtue of technological advancement, communication of news is rapid and sustained, which gives migrant communities a sense of belonging to multiple homes. In particular, the first generation of migrants continues to regard Bangladesh as central to their identity.

**3. Guess the meanings of the words in Column A from the context and match them with the meaning given in Column B:**

Column A	Column B
illiterate	abundant
plentiful	survey
census	uneducated
credit	compose
documents	personality
constitute	linking with others
social networking	loans
identity	papers



**4. Answer the following questions:**

- a. Who were the first generation of Bangladeshis to migrate to Sylhet and how did they migrate?
- b. Who were the second generation of Bangladeshi migrants in Britain and what reasons did they have for going to Britain?
- c. Which class dominated in the first two generations of Bangladeshi migrants to Britain? Were all the migrants in the 1950s illiterate and poor?

- d. Where do Bangladeshi migrants prefer to settle down in Britain?
  - e. How do Bangladeshi migrants in Britain connect to their country at this time?
  - f. According to the passage, which generation of Bangladeshi migrants is most closely connected to Bangladesh and which generation feels the least for the country?
- 5. The passage is organized on the basis of chronology i.e. in order of occurrence in time. Show how the writer carefully organizes the information assembled in the passage according to time periods and generations.**
- 6. Discuss the use of facts and figures in the passage. What purposes do they serve? How are they organized?**
- 7. Quite a few of the words used in the passage ending with -ly such as 'predominantly' and 'completely'. Make a list of these words. What purpose do they serve? What parts of speech do they belong to? Now make sentences of your own with these words.**

## Answer Key

### Lesson 1

3. a + iii, b + v, c + ii, d + iv, e + i
4. a. No, all diasporas are not voluntary. Some major diasporas were forced diasporas. For exp-Jewish diaspora of ancient time.
- b. Except from voluntary diasporas, people leave their country either being forced to do so or cherishing new settlement in a better place.
- c. In recent decades, the study of diaspora has started to attract scholars.
- d. Some of the major diasporas of the past include Jewish diaspora, Aryans diaspora, Palestinian diaspora and African diaspora.
- e. Globalization treats the whole world as one village and for this diasporas from one country to another country has become more frequent.
- 5.
- a. ancient times – In the ancient times, Aryans left Europe and came to settle in Indian subcontinent.
  - b. thousands of years ago – Thousands of years ago, there was a mighty kind who rules our subcontinent.
  - c. over the centuries – The phenomenon of diaspora has been discussed widely over the centuries.
  - d. recent decades – In recent decades, the phenomenon of diaspora has attracted the attention of the scholars.
  - e. twentieth century – Twentieth century has showed us many major diasporas.
  - f. Now – We are in the era of globalization now.
- 7.
- a. Immigrant
  - b. Phenomena

- c. Adjective
- d. In spite of the fact that, even though, despite the fact that
- e. attracts

## Lesson 2

3.

- a. origin – উৎপত্তি
- b. borough – স্বায়ত্তশাসিত গ্রাম বা শহরের অংশ
- a. concentration – একই জায়গায় কোন কিছুর বিশাল সমাহার
- b. notoriety – কুখ্যাত
- c. cues – ইঙ্গিত
- d. tunics – মহিলাদের জন্য কোমড়ের নিচ পর্যন্ত লম্বা শার্ট
- e. bid – নির্দিষ্ট দামে শ্রম বিক্রি করা
- f. distinct – স্বতন্ত্র
- g. landmark- সীমারেখা
- h. hard-won – কষ্টার্জিত

5.

- a. False

Correct ans: Almost half of British-Bangladeshi people live in London.

- b. True
- c. False

Correct ans: Bangladeshis in Brick Lane are confident in their future.

- d. False

Correct ans: The business motive was that with the help of street signs and advertising campaign, the area would be attractive to the tourists and thus be beneficial for Bangladeshi business located there.

- e. True

7.

- a. originate
- b. adverb
- c. adjective
- d. advertisement
- e. animatedly

**Lesson 3**

3.

<b>Column A</b>	<b>Column B</b>
amazing	Surprising
chain of stores	
protestation	a market set out dress that sells second hand or cheap goods
incredible	hard to believe
frugally	Complaints economically
entrepreneurship	owning business
generosity	kindness
exceed	go beyond
the market	a set of shops

4.

- a. In Italy, the Bangladeshis mainly live in Rome, Florence and Venice.
- b. The author's dream was to visit Italy and he expected to see the Bangladeshi's there.
- c. Some of the occupations of the Bangladeshis living in Italy are selling handbags, sunglasses and tourist material on the streets, running 'monohoridokan', selling trinkets-like little puppets made from balloons etc.
- d. The author was treated very dearly by the expatriate Bangladeshis. The emigrants save money to send at their home in Bangladesh.
- e. The bargaining took place between the author and some of these Bangladeshis were a very friendly one. The author wanted to pay more for the sunglass. But, the seller took the minimum price as the author was a Bangladeshi person.
- f. For their earnings these Bangladeshis can save a very little amount and they send it at their homes in Bangladesh.

5.

- a. F  
Correct ans: The author was very much impressed with the history of Italy.
- b. F  
Correct ans: The Bangladeshis the author met owned small businesses.
- c. F  
Correct ans: These Bangladeshis treated the author specially than the other foreign customers because the author was from their motherland.
- d. T
- e. T
- f. T