Long-Distance Nationalism: a Study of the Bagir Ghati Community Living in East London

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> To study a Banyan Tree, you not only must know its main stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality. The civilization of India, like the Banyan Tree, has shed its beneficent shade away from its own birthplace… India can live and grow by spreading abroad – not the political India, but the ideal India. (Tinker, 1977, p.1)

Although the number and proportion of people of South Asian descent living outside South Asia is small in relation to other migrant populations such as the Chinese, the Jews, the Africans, and the Europeans (Clarke, 1990, p.1), one of the aims of this paper is to use the study of the South Asian diaspora, and in particular the Bangladeshi overseas settlement in Britain, to highlight the complexity, confusion and diversity associated with the international migration process. This paper analyses the diaspora settlement in East London of migrants from the village of Bagir Ghat which is located in the district of Sylhet, Northeastern Bangladesh. The focus will be on the first generation Bagir Ghati migrants who have experienced 'primary migration' (Gardner and Shukur, 1994, pp.142-143) and who came to the British shores en masse in the 1950s and 1960s in search of quick economic prosperity. The initial intention was one of temporary settlement with the view of a 'return' to the land of origin. However, with the coming over of families, fellow kin and village members which have contributed to the reconstruction of familiar social and cultural practices in East London, temporary settlement has turned into permanent residence.

The experience of the Bagir Ghati first generation settlers conjures up more questions than answers in my attempt to highlight why certain diaspora communities still view the land of origin as the land of belonging,

the land of acceptance and the land of eventual return, alive or dead. Although not in the same category as the Tamil diaspora settlement in Norway and their political involvement in the search for a liberated Eelam (Fuglerud, 1999, pp.1-3, 174, 183), or the political interconnection between the Haitian overseas settlement in the United States and the Haitian homeland (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001, pp.2-35), it can be argued that through an ideological attachment to the 'ideal' of the homeland and through economic, social and political involvement with Bangladeshi, the Bagir Ghati experience echoes the existence of a certain strand of nationalism. This strand of nationalism does not claim allegiance to the land of settlement but to the land of origin – long-distance nationalism. All three examples, the Sri Lankan settlement in Norway, the Haitian settlement in the United States and the Bagir Ghati settlement in East London, are intrinsically linked to a radical transformation of the domestic homeland. As a 'potent contemporary ideology', note N. Glick Schiller and G. E. Fouron (1999, pp.17-19), long-distance nationalism is reconfiguring the way many people understand the relationship between populations and the states that claim to represent them. A new form of state, the 'transborder state', has emerged which extends its reach across borders, claiming that its emigrants and their descendents remain an integral part of their ancestral homeland. It is the main contention of this paper that the Bagir Ghati diaspora settlement of East London constitutes this 'transborder' state.

> I have memories of stealing mangoes from my neighbour's garden… I was free, care-free and life was so simple… how I long to taste the air and tread the ground of my place of belonging, my village -Bagir Ghat. (Haji Kotoi Miah, 2003. Interview)

The following section of this paper will concentrate on Bangladesh and in particular, the region of Sylhet. It examines the experiences of ten people from the village of Bagir Ghat who have experienced 'primary migration'. Bagir Ghat is a small village situated on the banks of the Kushiara River in

the thana of Golapgonj, Sylhet. It has a population of around 4,500 people of which 2,000 are estimated to be abroad, 900 being in Britain alone. Bagir Ghat is a village of small landowners and the inhabitants survive on subsistence farming. Annual crops that are produced are rice, wheat and cotton. The village has one main high school and a local bazaar where people go for food shopping, banking and post office queries. The village also has a madrashah and a hospital, both of which are part-funded by the state and part-funded by remittances from abroad. The first person to leave the village for London was Mutlib Ali in 1936. Along with the dual mechanisms of help from fellow village members in Britain and assistance from Haji Shiraz Uddin Ahmed, a literate ex-British army official who helped people with translation and form-filling, a high percentage of Bagir Ghati young males took advantage of Britain's immigration policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s (B. Ahmed, 2003. Interview).

The lack of acceptance and loss of identity for the first generation Bagir Ghati settlers in Britain has compelled them more towards the country of origin. Although they live many thousands of miles away and probably will not return to the homeland, the 'intention' or the 'myth' of return is still paramount (Anwar, 1979). They still view Sylhet and the village of Bagir Ghat as 'their' home. As one respondent clearly states, 'home is where the heart is' (Haji Abudz Zamann, 2003. Interview). There is, however, a problem with this mindset. The lack of acceptance is something not just paramount in Britain or the land of settlement - these migrants and especially their British-born offspring are also facing this problem back in the homeland of Sylhet. Sylheti migrants have become polarised from the rest of Sylheti society mainly due to disparities in wealth and because economic remittance to fellow kin in Bangladesh is not as large as it once was, which leads to resentment from extended kinship dependents who rely heavily on remittances from abroad (Gardner and Shukur, 1994, p.155). Furthermore, Sylheti migrants face many societal and institutional barriers upon return to the homeland. As M. Islam puts it:

> [Londoni Sahibs and Dubaiwalas] are harassed and ruthlessly exploited by unscrupulous and corrupt customs, police and immigration officials [upon return to Bangladesh]… they often fall victim to robbers, cheats and local ruffians. They are frequently blamed by their neighbours for their eccentricities, reckless and ostentatious consumerism, obsession for land, outlandish spending sprees and idiosyncratic excesses. (1987, p.366)

This feeling of displacement felt by the Sylheti migrants and resentment felt by Sylheti nationals is backed up by one of the Bagir Ghati respondents interviewed, 'even I feel different when I return home [to Bangladesh]', he suggests:

> people treat us differently when my family and I return… I don't resent them as I can understand why they do it… although I consider myself to be more Bengali than British, I recognise that over the years, along with economic differences, we also now have cultural differences'.(Haji Maram Ali, 2003. Interview)

This quote and Islam's statement clearly echoes C. Bate's (2001, pp.1-45) warning about how international is transnational identity between South Asians in the homeland and South Asians in the diaspora. Is it the case that to be a Hindu Indian in Leicester, is the same as to be a Hindu Indian in Mumbai? Bate overwhelmingly concludes that identities based on historic claims to the homeland, which are politicised by communalist claims to the nation, are secondary to the practical realities of inter-ethnic divisions which come as a result of class- or wealth-based differences, gender differences, caste politics, and division over claims to territory all of which lead on to competition, conflict and identity confusion between individuals from the same ethnicity. This begs the question - how can national identity and claims to the nation prosper in the light of inter-national and inter-ethnic disparities? For the purposes of this paper, it is therefore suggested that the obvious economic advantages of Sylheti migrants from Britain negates any claims to the actual Sylheti experience, based on poverty. Thus, a 'common'

transnational identity becomes hard to establish, and resentment and non-acceptance in the country of origin becomes a forgone conclusion. However, despite Bate's warning, and N. Al-Ali and K. Khoser's (2002, pp.1-14) claim that a new globally orientated identity is threatening the relationship between transnational communities and 'home' which is testing loyalties and re-defining the 'meaning' of home, this does not deter Bagir Ghati first generation migrants from East London in pursuing an identity based on childhood memories, linguistic commonalities and the land of birth. As such, it can be argued that the Bagir Ghati settlement of East London have been caught in what R. D. Grillo (2001) has termed the 'betwixt and between' (neither here nor there) phase of transmigration.

Islam also highlights a warning that many Sylheti nationals are not aware of:

> [Bangladeshi] society seem to be quite oblivious of the painful struggles and horrendous travel experiences of these oft-ridiculed Dubai-walas or Londoni Sahibs. (1987, p.366)

It is clear that the 'painful struggles' to which Islam is referring are centred around the confusion over identity, the facing of racial and ethnic discrimination, socially and institutionally, non-acceptance in the host-society, poor housing and education that many of the Sylhetis faced in Britain and in other countries of settlement, of which many of the Bangladeshi nationals are unaware. They just see the material accumulation of wealth and disparities in lifestyle and disregard the social and psychological torture associated with migration and uprooting.

> Even if I say that I am British, the people from this country will never accept me because I come from another country and I have different skin colour… this is why I will always be Bengali first and British second. (Alfu Miah, 2003. Interview)

Even though Bagir Ghatis are 'betwixt and between' two separate locations, frequent Bagir Ghati gatherings in East London reinforce the notion and meaning of 'home'. Group consciousness, ethnic commonalities, myths,

memories, values and symbols of the 'homeland' are discussed and in the words of A. Smith (1986, p.42), 'manifested in a round of ceremonies, rites, artefacts and [community] laws which bind the community to its celestial pantheon and its homeland'. Thus, gatherings such as Eid celebrations, Friday Jumma prayers, community festivals such as the Bangla-Town International Curry Festival (Rudd, 2003, p.5), the celebration of Bangladesh Independence Day, cultural shows, weddings, extended family get-togethers are all examples of how the first generation Bagir Ghati settlers help 'bind' their fellow migrant community to the homeland.

Whilst the ideal of return to the homeland is a real one, the practicalities involved makes return very unrealistic. Return to Bagir Ghat is blocked by many obstacles. Firstly, the majority of the immediate extended family (children, grandchildren) have been born and brought up in Britain and leaving them behind does not appeal, especially as first generation settlers know that their children will not follow suit and 'return' with them (Gardner and Shukur, 1994, p.202). As one respondent notes, 'I want to go back even though I am old, but I can't. My children are established here… they are working and studying… it's not fair on them' (Haji Altafur Rahman, 2003. Interview). Secondly, many of the Bagir Ghati settlers have developed illnesses such as arthritis, diabetes, coronary diseases and high blood pressure and need the medical care and attention given to them in Britain (Gardner, 2002, pp.22, 145-176). Furthermore, once families are reunited in Britain, the need to revisit Bangladesh lessens. Coupled with this are the escalating fares of travel, work and school commitments in Britain and all the medical complications associated with diet, climate changes, and sanitation. Finally, along with the above mentioned factors, the financial implications associated with 'return' have challenged the notion of return and linkage with the homeland. It could be argued that many of the Bagir Ghati settlers have become accustomed to the capitalist lifestyle of income maximisation (Wallerstein, 1974, 1984). The costs of 'return migration'

(Gmelch, 1980, pp.135-159) back to the homeland, whilst ideologically appealing, are too risky.

The purpose of the previous discussion has been to illustrate the complex process of migration and its side effects such as displacement and identity formation. I have also tried to highlight many of the explanations that help demonstrate why people engage in such a complex process. In the Bagir Ghati case, the overwhelming factor has been an economical one which convinced many to come over in the 1950s and 1960s. Ironically, it is also due to the over-dependence on economical factors in the British mainland which makes the physical departure or 'return' to the homeland very unlikely. Regardless of this, whilst 'return' is unlikely, the 'ideal' of return still persists especially as group consciousness based on common ethnicity, language, heritage, culture and religion keeps alive the political ideology of long-distance nationalism between the Bagir Ghati diaspora community of East London and the village of Bagir Ghat in Sylhet. The origins of nationalism, whether ethnically or territorially bound, thus merits further investigation.

If we take into account M. Weber's (1922) study of the ethnic origins of nationalism and B. Anderson's (1983) conception of the linguistic 'imagined community', it becomes clear from the field research undertaken for the purposes of this paper that the Bagir Ghati community of East London constitutes an 'ethnic group' based on nationalist aspirations. In his study of *Economy and Society* in 1922, Weber gave a detailed account of an ethnic group which describes aptly the experiences of the first generation Bagir Ghati settlers in East London. In his definition of an ethnic group, Weber argued that they are:

> those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration. (1922, p.389)

Weber argued that a combination of shared customs, similarities of physical type and actual memories of migration can lead to 'group formation' even in a new country. He notes that the 'persistent effect of the old ways and of childhood reminiscences continue as a source of native-country sentiment among emigrants even when they have become so thoroughly adjusted to the new country' (Weber, 1987, p.18). This discussion and definition clearly sits well with the experiences of the Bagir Ghati settlers in East London. All ten respondents interviewed suggested that mentally and ideologically, their loyalties still lay with the motherland as it was the country of their birth and as Weber's argument suggests, they feel that memories of their childhood spent in Bagir Ghat and the fact that they have physical similarities with people from Bagir Ghat acts as a 'source of native country sentiment' even though they have been residing in East London for over forty years. For example, one respondent powerfully claimed that 'my mother, my brother, my sister are all in Bagir Ghat. I was born and brought up in Bagir Ghat, I still have happy memories of my childhood in Bagir Ghat… mentally, I have remained Bengali' (Haji Altafur Rahman, 2003. Interview). This powerful statement opens up Anderson's debate surrounding nationalism, identity, territorial boundaries and the role of the state. Using an anthropological framework, B. Anderson defines nationalism as an 'imagined political community… it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'(1983, pp.5-6).

Nation-formation based upon the sentiments of nationalism and defined territorially has become a fundamental feature of contemporary world politics (Jackson, 2001, pp.35-49). The 'nation', ague Guibernau and Rex, is:

> an emotionally charged object and nationalism emerges as an ideology centred upon the sentiment of belonging to a particular community and the subsequent desire to see it flourish and develop. (Guibernau, Rex, 1997, p.4)

The ideology of nationalism and allegiance to the 'emotionally charged… nation' has led to another development which plays a pivotal role in contemporary international politics, that of the 'nation-state'. Guibernau and Rex's definition of the nation-state is a very interesting one for the scope of this paper:

> The nation-state was created as a political institution with a territorial base which utilised the doctrine of nationalism in its foundational moment to generate a common culture and a sense of belonging to its members… Once the nation-state was created… whether out of one nation or as a multicultural or imperial entity, it actively promoted the cultural homogenization of its members and even appealed to a new common ethnicity which had to be constructed in a symbolic manner. (Guibernau and Rex, 1997, pp.4-5)

This definition is very interesting as it clearly demonstrates that the Bagir Ghatis have no form of allegiance to Britain as a nation or a state even though they have been living here for the past 50-60 years. They are not 'culturally homogenized' with the rest of the British public, let alone with the many other communities established in multicultural Britain. Furthermore, the first generation Bagir Ghati settlers are not part of a British 'common culture' nor do they have a 'sense of belonging' to the British nation. There are clearly major doubts as to what nation the Bengali settlers belong. Thus, as Z. Bauman (1996, p.19) notes, the issue of 'identity comes to the fore when there are doubts about belonging'. Furthermore, due to feelings of alienation, racial subordination, identity confusion (Parekh, 2000) and identity contextualization (Gardner, 2002, p.11), it has been very hard to establish this 'common culture' in synchronisation with the rest of British society. In fact, as Smith (1986, p.41) argues, 'ethnie' becomes even more 'crystallised', more identity conscious and more self-aware when exposed to the durability and the ubiquitous presence and longevity of other ethnic communities. Thus, the living side by side in Britain with people from other cultures, other faiths, and other colours does not install a

'common culture', but 'crystallises' further the difference between 'them' and 'us', and tightens in the process claims to the Bengali nation built on the platform of ethnic self-awareness. As A. Kershen (1998, p.2) puts it, 'without an 'other' to identify with or differ from, self-recognition would be impossible'. Following from Smith's comment, Guibernau's and Rex's definition clearly is echoing something which is multicultural in structure but, even in this instance, the Bagir Ghatis are still not part of the 'common' multicultural culture of Britain (if there is such a thing). They have remained firmly rooted within their own colonies, re-creating a 'home' within 'home'. They have distanced themselves from mainstream society, both structurally, physically, and ideologically and have failed to become part of the British multicultural experiment.

The Bagir Ghati experience In East London further highlights L. Greenfeld's (1992, p.11) useful distinction between 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism. Whilst the Bagir Ghatis are part of the British 'civic' nation which is linked to British citizenship and is 'voluntaristic' in nature, they are not part of the British 'ethnic' nation which, agues Greenfeld, is 'inherent', no-one can 'acquire it' and it constitutes a 'genetic characteristic'. It must be suggested here that identity should not be seen as genetic, rather certain salient genetic markers such as the colour of skin contribute to identity formation. Also, Greenfeld's analysis of 'ethnic' nationalism highlights the danger in associating ethnicity with nationalism as there are so many different ethnic groups present in Britain, who all have their own 'genetic' characteristics. Thus, Bhagir Ghati's cannot be considered part of the British ethnic nation as their ethnicity is 'inherent' from Bangladesh and therefore their 'national' loyalties should lie with the country of their ethnic identity. Possessing a British passport, having the right to vote and being part of the British 'civic' nation does not stir feelings of national sentiment within the Bagir Ghatis. Being part of the 'civic' nation does not make the Bagir Ghatis, using Guibernau's and Rex's words, 'emotionally charged objects' as membership is voluntary, whereas, being part of the 'ethnic' nation does

as membership is inherent. In this case, however, ethnic nationalism is more linked with Bangladesh than Britain and therefore it makes sense to suggest that the process of long-distance nationalism is at work.

The problems raised by the discussion above highlight Rex's (1997, pp.205-220) theory of ethnicity which, he argues, needs to address this problem between primordial ethnicity ('inherent') on the one hand and that of 'instrumental' or 'situational' ethnicity ('voluntaristic… civic') on the other. It becomes clear, after a detailed analysis of C. Geertz's (1996, pp.40-45) discussion of 'primordiality', that the Bagir Ghatis constitute a form of primordial ethnicity. It can be argued that the Bagir Ghati primary form of community, as discussed by Geertz, is based upon the following elements: a strong kinship network, a strong sense of neighbourhood, shared language, shared beliefs about the supernatural, shared history/ narrative about group origin and an intense feeling of belonging together. These are all factors which give rise to an ethnic identity which can also develop into feelings of nationalism as participants are centred upon the sentiment of belonging to a particular community.

Taking a negative outlook on primordial ethnic identity and directing criticism towards C. Geertz, P. Brass (1991, pp.239-347), along with F. Barth (1998, pp.24-38), raises an important question about the boundaries of primordiality. In siding more with the 'instrumental' or the 'situational' theory (Roosens, 1989, pp.3-16) of ethnicity, Brass has suggested that one of the main problems with the primordial theory is that some of the components of a primordial ethnic community may stretch well beyond the boundaries of the immediate community in question. Brass suggests that ethnic identities are not primordial as the project of identity-building based on the dialects of ethnicity is nearly always socially and politically constructed by the territorial nation-state. Boundary maintenance and population mobilisation, pursued by the state elite, take precedence over primordial ethnic identity. Unwittingly, Brass's attempt to downplay the importance of transnational identity and Barth's 'culture' determined

criticism of Geertz's primordial analysis adds further impetus to the transnational focus of Bagir Ghati conceptions of the 'nation' and 'nationalism'.

Two conclusions can be reached when equating the Bagir Ghati sample with the notions of identity and nationalism. Firstly, claims to the 'nation' and self identification are borderless. As Kershen reminds us:

> the boundaries of identity cannot be simply and clearly drawn… identity is multifaceted and variable and is in a constant state of flux and can never be static… the boundaries of identification based on political, religious, social, personal and geographical grounds are fuzzy and complex. (1998, pp.2, 19)

You do not need to live, geographically, in a particular country to be able to call that country 'home' and have allegiances towards it. Nation and nationality cannot be observed or objectively defined. Just because certain first generation Bagir Ghatis living in East London may have assumed the English language and also adopted certain aspects of British culture, it does not mean that their loyalties are towards the British nation even though they are living in a territory governed by the British nation-state. Furthermore, in criticising Brass, P. Gilroy (1987, pp.153-160) reminds us that the discourse of diaspora settlement undermines the territorial authenticity and the 'nation-building' project undertaken by the nation-state. Diaspora discourse articulates together both roots and routes to construct what Gilroy describes as 'alternative public spheres', which give rise to forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time and space in order to live inside it with a difference. Gilroy thus clearly suggests that diaspora and irredentist identifications clearly undermine the territorial nation-state. Furthermore, as Weber (1997, p.25) reminds us, using the example of the Baltic Germans whose loyalties lie not with the German but Russian state, any sense of 'nationality' in the modern meaning of the term cannot be simply defined by a common language or a common culture. Feelings of nationalism are stirred by much deeper and

more powerful emotions. Thus, the Bagir Ghatis feel a greater sense of community with the 'homeland' because they feel a subjective and 'common' (Haji Shamsul Hoque, 2003. Interview) affinity with people from Sylhet. Therefore, loyalties to the 'nation' can transcend boundaries established by the nation-state. Claims to the nation cannot be objectively defined. Instead, using the words of Weber (1997, pp.24-25), 'the belief in common nationality [is] qualitative'.

Secondly, as Weber concludes in his discussion of 'ethnicity', the concept of the 'nation' is entwined and linked to the concept of 'political power'. Weber contests:

> the concept [nation] seems to refer… to a united phenomenon, to a specific kind of pathos which is linked to the idea of a powerful political community of people… the more power is emphasised, the closer appears to be the link between [the] nation and the state.(1997, p.26)

 The Bagir Ghatis are given more access to 'power' in Sylhet because they are part of the powerful ethnic and political community due to their racial, linguistic and religious commonalities which install a common identity. This access to power is something which they have been denied access to by the white majority in the 'host society' (Tinker, 1977, p.1). They do not share commonalities with the dominant and mainstream white community of Britain and hence are not part of 'their' exclusive ethnic and political community and are therefore excluded from the power structure. This argument by Weber is carried forward by A. Smith (1986, pp.43-44) who has suggested that when a group constitutes a majority of the population then its ethnic myths and symbols will be represented in the mainstream mainly through the agents of ethnic and national socialisation such as the religious institutions, the law, the family, the education system (Gellner, 1983, pp.1-7, 19-38), the media and the business class. In the case of the Bagir Ghatis settling in East London, they have been subjected to the ethnic symbols and myths of the white majority. They, along with other migrant

settlers in Britain, are an 'ethnic minority' who, according to T. Eriksen (1993, pp.1-17) are not part of the mainstream dominant group, as such, their 'ideal' is that of the ethnic homeland or the territory of belonging. Stressed in political terms, Smith suggests that ethnic unity is solidified when ethnic group is in the minority and due to the denial of access to power, the allegiance of these minority groups is not towards the structures of power in host society, but to common origins situated in a far off land (1986, p.43). This second conclusion reminds us of the important interplay between nationalism and power and how claims to the nation and feelings of nationalism are a direct result of access to, predominantly political, power.

All evidence collated from an analysis of the field, primary and secondary research points overwhelmingly towards one conclusion - a distinct strand of long-distance nationalism exists within the Bagir Ghati community of East London which 'links' them emotionally, financially, ideologically, socially and politically to the homeland. The tenets upon which these nationalist feelings are based are centred around memories of childhood, common ancestry and heritage, linguistic commonalities and a shared value system with the land of birth, the 'motherland', and not the country of settlement. The complexity of the arguments of ethnicity and nationalism put forward by Weber, Smith, Anderson, Glick Schiller and Eriksen demonstrate that the global Bagir Ghati community live within a transnational social field constructed largely through remittances, letters, trading of goods, and memories and also via participation in transnational household ceremonies and rituals. This heightened link with the homeland is strengthened further with the failure of the British multicultural experiment which has treated migrants unequally based on the social markers of skin, religion and customs. This exclusion from mainstream dominant society has propelled the Bagir Ghatis to seek their sense of belonging and identity elsewhere.

Whilst the global political economy is an indispensable framework for understanding Sylheti emigration and should not be discounted from our

analysis, I would like to end this paper with a comment on the transnational nature of identity in contemporary world politics. In this transnational era, we should accept that our personal and social boundaries will need constant re-invention and re-definition. What the Bagir Ghati migratory experience highlights is that groups and human beings are fluid and constantly engaging in a process of physical movement which precipitates a transnational identity. Communities, as in the case of the Bagir Ghati population living in both the village of Bagir Ghat in Sylhet and in East London, transcend geographical and political boundaries. People's subjective perceptions of where they belong cannot be defined by legal or situational citizenship governed by the nation-state. The issues of identity, self-awareness and ethnic conceptions of community are far more complex in character and deserve further investigation. We may have to accept Gardner's (1995, p.5) explanation that due to the complex perceptions of 'home', both the first and second generation of Bagir Ghati migrants may have entered a 'state of permanent exile where nowhere is truly home'. The Bagir Ghatis, it can be argued, have become part of U. Hannerz's (1992, p.261) 'creole world᾿ or constitute Glick Schiller's (2001, p.7) 'transborder state' where lives and nationalist aspirations are no longer conventionally bound or determined by space. Hannerz's creole world, however, must not be seen as an argument for global homogeneity as diasporic cultures often involve religious revivalism which heightens a sense of difference and separateness. We may, however, see it as a victory for proponents of the 'globalisation' argument as the transnational interconnection between the Bagir Ghatis based in Sylhet and East London echoes a relationship which transcends national boundaries (Featherstone, 1990, p.6).

Glossary

Bagir Ghat   A village in Golapgonj, Sylhet

Bagir Ghati   People who come from Bagir Ghat

Bangladeshi	People who come from Bangladesh
Bazaar	Marketplace
Bengali	Official language of Bangladesh
Bidesh	Bengali word for abroad
Desh	Home
Dubai-wala	Name given to returning migrants from Dubai
Golapgonj	A ward in Sylhet
Izzat	Honour
Londoni	Name given to returning migrants from London
Madrashah	Islamic School
Pardesh	Hindi word for abroad
Sahib	Polite term for 'Mister' (Mr)
Sylhet	Region of Northeast Bangladesh
Sylheti	People who come from Sylhet
Thana	Another name for 'borough' or 'ward'

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