



‘Diaspora Day’ in India: A role model for Bangladesh to connect non-residents with homeland

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Abstract

India has the largest Diaspora in the world. ‘Diaspora Day’ – Pravasi Bharatiya Divas – is a very prominent occasion for Non-resident Indians. The function held biennially to commemorate the return of Mohandas Gandhi in India on 9th January 1915. This commemoration laid the foundation to create strong Homeland-Diaspora bondage and most importantly it becomes the stage for Indian Diaspora to enhance their respective business opportunity with the government, homeland and other Co-Diasporas. In that regards, this article evaluates the prospects to observe ‘Bangladeshi Diaspora Day’ in an institutionalized way alike India and suggests, how Bangladesh government can initiate embarkation to homeland of world fifth largest Diaspora community. Bangladesh has an emphatic emigration history and it’s Diaspora contribute a lot. This history and contribution needed to be commemorated. Historically, 10th January – Bangladesh’s ‘Founding Father’ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home first time in 1972 after independence – can be observed as ‘Bangladeshi Diaspora Day’.

Keywords: diaspora, diaspora day, migration, emigrant, Bangladesh, India etc

1. Introduction

There were ages when people left homeland forever and never looked back. It happened in transnational migration, it happened in internal migration too. There were ages when connectivity was ancient, or at best medieval, required time to reach a destination were unknown and people never desired to come back there once settled in another place. That scenario never changed as a whole in the post-colonial capitalist age also. Yes, there were nostalgia and must emotion. But, everything left with no appeal as reasons come first. And the foremost reason would be the financial benefits. People would ask, what is the financial benefits to revert back to the homeland. Probably it’s derived from the norms of capitalism that emotions, nostalgias have nothing to do before it. So it required a huge setback and this is where Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Non-resident Indian Day), popularly known as PBD, has quite successfully promoted the reunion of Indian Diasporas from all over the globe with its diversify tools of programs.

As the title of the article suggests, in this paper, we refer PBD as the ‘Diaspora Day’ for the sake of prescribing a ‘Unitarian’ role model in front of the world. But, as the title also suggests, here we are not putting the phenomenon for all the countries in the world. We are taking only Bangladesh as a case study for some of the historical similarities to commemorate the ‘Diaspora Day’ in its own periphery and territory.

2. Migrant bangladeshis compare to Indians

India has the largest number of Diaspora living outside the country and it has given India an extra edge in the world politics to build up a bilateral relationship with respective countries. This is where, altogether, Diaspora day and the get together got extra importance and edge. Bangladesh has been witnessed also a very fluent outgoing migrant. People from Bangladeshi origin have been sphered all over the world for many reasons and these numbers are not small. As per the report of United Nation Population Division in 2017,

in the category of among the ‘Twenty countries or areas of origin with the largest diaspora populations’, Bangladesh ranked 5th with 7.5 million Diaspora. Compare to the first ranked among the countries, India’s 16.6 million, it’s almost double (The United Nations Population Division). But, compared to the ratio of total population and total territorial land of India, this migrant ratio from Bangladesh is very loud in number.

This data provokes, Bangladesh should look upon this opportunity to call the Diaspora to their homeland and signify their contribution by commemorating a very special day of her history. But, before come to dignify and asses that historical aspect of Bangladesh, let’s invoke the historical background from India’s perspectives to commence the Diaspora day.

3. Gandhi: The man behind the inspiration

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) has been observed to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915; thus the event, which usually occurs from 7th to 9th January biennially, regarded as ‘Divas’ (Days).

In late 1888, he went to London to study bar at law. In 1891, at the age of 22 after being ‘called to the bar’, he came back from London to India. He started practicing law in Rajkot and Bombay. But, being a Kathiwari Gujarati he got a call from South Africa to act as a personal lawyer of an Indian Diaspora, who belonged from Kathiawar. Gandhi had a deal of a year with them. Interestingly, he supposed to stay only one year there for the purpose of the contract to be fulfilled; but he stayed a long 21 years, means almost half of his then 45 years life, before leaving South Africa in 1914. This stint gave him the recognition of a Diaspora. But, since his political affiliation gone higher, what he had started basically from South Africa and continued with those in India in the Independence movements and made him the supreme face of modern Indian politics, he earned the respect of ‘The Greatest Indian Diaspora’.

This journey of PBD was started in 2003, during the tenure of former Indian Prime Minister recently late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his government decorated the program with Gandhi being the center part. The former Member Secretary of High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora and the Member Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the first and Second Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations Ambassador J.C. Sharma has written (Sharma):

The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora constituted by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government of India also proposed to hold annual celebrations called "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" in honour of the Indian diaspora to ensure its sustained interaction with India. The significance of Gandhiji again came to the forefront when the organizers decided to organize the event on the day of Gandhiji's return from South Africa.

The main motto of the program has been described as follows by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of India (Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)):

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots. During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honored with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

In a sum up, it has been shown that PBD is a stage where Diaspora Indians – both Non-Residence Indian (NRI) and People of Indian Origin (PIO) – can join to create the opportunity for their own respective businesses. Academician would meet academicians, Businessman would meet businessmen, a politician would meet politicians; this is how PBD, as a government-organized official program, creates opportunities for the Diaspora community beyond the emotional attachment with the homeland from 2003 onwards with its occasions. Thus, both sides get privileged. The Diaspora community now feel much more attachment with the homeland to contribute in many fields like business, education, health, tourism, medical. Even they are playing an important role in making foreign policy with their respective host land.

Certainly, the three days of PBD bring the biggest festival for the Diaspora community to get the opportunity to return home. But, due to its importance in many faces, PBD becomes a broader stage to look forward beyond the festival. The amount of appeal it appeared, other countries can arrange such an important segment to invite their respective diasporas in making a strong homeland-host land bond.

4. Diaspora Perspectives: Bangladeshi aspects

As we have discussed earlier, the data show Bangladesh has a very good perspective of the Diaspora community to create an official connection with them. In this portion, we'll discuss it in detail. Let us put some data with an excerpt to understand the situation of people movement of Bangladesh from home to abroad. Though Bangladesh has been one of the most densely populated country (10th as of 2018) in the world (Statistics Times), human migration also

has got fluent gear gradually over the years. It has its own history also. Be as one of the parts of Greater Bengal or as East Bengal or as East Pakistan or at present Bangladesh, the surroundings around of the world largest 'Ganges Delta' or 'Bengal Delta' (Majumder 41) has been witnessed human mobilization for years. Meant, historically it is a place of out-migration. That legacy continues with modern-day migration in this part of Bengal, after its independence in 1971 from Pakistan and continues with an increased ratio.

On the other hand, when we are talking about history, the emigrant history of Bangladesh cannot be studied separately from the migrant history of United or Greater India. Foremost reason of this is, Bangladesh is only a 48 years old sovereign territory and its long social, political cultural history have been integrated with Indian history. As Dr. Dipak Malik stated (Malik 46):

The story of emigration is not a simple tale of times past; it is intricately woven in the complex patterns of a new world in the making. The Indian emigration naturally is part of this momentous history.

With conveying this statement, Bangladesh emigration does the same. It is truly a part of that 'momentous history' of Indian migration. For an instant, if the first generation migration happened before 1947, which usually happened, and his/her heritage situates in current day Bangladesh, then it brings a new dimension for the Diaspora to be defined. Whether they should be called Indian Diaspora or Bangladeshi Diaspora – it is a matter of question. As history says (Jain 29):

Indian migration overseas began with the export of indentured, contract or "coolie" labour in the 1830s when following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire labour was needed to work on the sugar plantations in various British colonies. Until the Second World War Indians emigrated mainly as indentured or contract labourers to British Guiana, Trinidad, Surinam, South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, Reunion (a French colony); and as kangani or maistry labourers to Burma, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Now, one notable thing about this indenture labored migration we should acknowledge is that it all started from Bengal's very own Kolkata (then Calcutta). Kolkata port was the place of embarking upon. The 'Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates' had mentioned about Kolkata while describing the history in the following manner of (Sanderson, Sandhurst and Robertson 02):

In the early years of the 19th century certain sporadic attempts appear to have been made to engage labourers in Bengal to serve for a term of years in Mauritius and Reunion, but it was the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies in 1834 which gave the first great impetus. In that year the sugar planters of Mauritius began importing labourers largely, and about 7,000 emigrants seem to have left Calcutta for that Colony between 1834 and 1837.

History also says that, in those preliminary days, Bengal, namely Kolkata, was stood first in terms of supplying

emigrants, which also included not only Hindus but also Muslims, though the number was not as much as Hindus (Jain 30):

In the first phase beginning in 1834 the majority of emigrants were recruited in the 'hill collie' district of Chota Nagpur division and Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan districts of the Bengal Presidency.... Of the three presidencies Calcutta stood first in volume of recruitment and embarkation, and Madras second...
...the ratio of Hindus and Muslim appeared to represent the then all India ratio of the two communities, i.e., 86:14...

Though these two statements hardly solve our question but give us some evidence about the contribution of Bengal towards the colony helping them with indentured labor. Who knows, there was nobody or anybody among those initial seven thousand migrants from this part of Bengal, which is now called Bangladesh.

But, later history of 1909 says some evidence was there to be cherished. Though this reference is not of the early period, still it was a time, when East Bengal was part of India and along with Assam, it was a separate province from West Bengal till 1911. The available reference we have in the form of 'Report on Emigration from The Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, 1909' has said (Banks 5-6):

Classifying the number of emigrants registered for the colonies according to place of birth... 1027 or 8.09 percent from Bengal and Bihar, including Eastern Bengal and Assam.

Moving further, it has been described that, 1 person from the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was there. Though, it doesn't confirm the exact location. C. Banks has written (Banks 9):

Of those despatched, 704 were natives of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, 7,442 of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 230 of the Central Provinces, Berar and Central India, 68 of the Punjab, 219 of the Native States, 8 of Ajmere, 14 of the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay, and 1 of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

So, the bottom line of this report is, there was at least one emigrant from the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam before the Bengal reunification in 1911, but the evidence is still ambiguous to find out whether it was from the land of Eastern Bengal or Assam!

Meanwhile, the latest evidence which talks about the Bengali emigrants in the form of Indian migrants to the United Kingdom left no confusion. It had happened just after the Second World War. During that time, due to the effect of the war, the UK faced labor crisis and they initiated to take labor from the Commonwealth states and India was one of the biggest contributors. (Jain 29)

In the form of Indian, people who moved from Bengal, most of them were significantly from Sylhet region, which was then part of East Bengal and now of Bangladesh. Benjamin Etzold and Bishwajit Mallik in describing the history of Bengali migrants from then East Bengal in their very handy

research on 'International Migration from Bangladesh' have written (Etzold and Mallick):

After the Second World War, the United Kingdom faced labor shortages and therefore began to attract labor migrants of the Commonwealth states. Young men from Bangladesh, in particular from the Sylhet region, thus left for the UK, mostly settled in London, and contributed to meeting the increasing demand for cheap labor. This initiated chain migration of further workers and family members to the UK in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and led to close transnational connections between Bangladesh and the UK.

Till late 1940s Bangladesh was part of India and then before 1971, it was the part of Pakistan. In Pakistan period, there were not that much of huge emigration towards the western world or even in the Middle East; only exception happened during the liberation war of 1971. During that time, mostly Hindus left their land and refuted to the neighboring land of West Bengal of India. Muslims also sheltered their life to refugee camps in that tragic time, but after the war got finished on 16th December 1971, so many Hindu families never get back to their motherland in Bangladesh and decided to rather stay in India. (Datta 147-159) These people who left their land in the time of East Pakistan, always carry nostalgias about their home, their childhood, boyhood memories. But, they have never been treated as Bangladeshi Diaspora rather quoted as just 'Bangladeshi migrants'. The scholarly world hardly focuses on this issue. Anyway, within two years of independent Bangladesh, there was a great Oil Crisis happened in the world from October 1973, due to the embargo of the OPEC states to some world giants, especially USA (Castles and Vezzoli 68-75). That crisis actually brought cheap labor to the Middle East. Huge numbers of Bangladeshis that time turned their head towards that region and the emigrants' growth from Bangladesh moved faster than ever. (Etzold and Mallick) Statistics will show us that, from the day emigrations got started in independent Bangladesh, the number of out-migrants just excelled to bigger and bigger day to day, year to year, decade to decade. For example, in 1976, there were only Six thousands people emigrated for work, which is an increased number compared to previous couple of years. These expatriate were basically mixed with temporary and permanent workers. In the 1980s the number got higher from the previous decade. But, from the 1990s till date the emigrant tally has been reached to the quota of million (Etzold and Mallick):

Between 1990 and 1995, 1.2 million Bangladeshis left the country to live and work abroad. Out-migration increased to almost three million between 2005 and 2010. In the year 2008 alone, 875,000 migrant workers were recruited from Bangladesh.

So, this data indicates, how and in which manner the emigrants from Bangladesh are getting increased. Thus it proves right when scholars say (Etzold and Mallick):

Bangladesh's history is a history of migration. People have been mobile in the Bengal Delta region for centuries. Patterns of contemporary labor migration go back to colonial times. Every year, around 500,000

Bangladeshis leave the country to work abroad. Bangladesh's economy depends on the emigrants' remittances.

It's a very serious statement for a country of just 56000 sq. miles. In average, Bangladesh produces half million emigrants for the world community every single year. It's not only benefiting the host land but also brings privilege to the homeland. Truly, the Diaspora community have been contributing a lot in the economics of Bangladesh from different parts of the world. As for example, in 2015, the remittances Bangladesh had received were 15.4 billion US dollars; which was 0.22% of the whole GDP (International Organization for Migration). In 2016, it was reduced to 13.6 billion US dollars (Roxana Torre). Very next year it remained almost the same with 13.5 billion US dollars. But, in 2018, it was boosted up to 15.5 billion US dollars, which is the highest remittance Bangladesh has ever got in its history from the overseas Bangladeshi. (BMET)

As per the data, provided by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Expatriates', Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh Government, in 'Country Wise Overseas Employment from 1976 to 2018' segment, Out of 12,199,124 employees, 50 percent of Bangladeshi overseas employ have been done in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with 30.29 and 19.65 percent workers in respective countries. Saudi Arabia is the hub of more than 3.6 million Bangladeshi, while UAE has 2.3 million plus Bangladeshi in this period that has been mentioned. Oman (11.85%), Qatar (6.29%) and Kuwait (5.12%) are the leading countries in the tally among the Middle East states with hosting 1.4, 0.75 and 0.61 million Bangladeshis respectively. Meanwhile, Malaysia and Singapore are the most prominent destination apart from Middle East states for Bangladeshis. Malaysia has given 1.05 Million (8.77%) and Singapore 0.73 Million (6.08%) employment to Bangladeshis from 1976 to 2018. (BMET)

On the other hand, according to the data published by the United Nations Population Division, for the first 17 years of the current millennium, the amount of world migration has been amplified from 172.6 million (2000) to 257.7 (2017); means about 67% migrants has been increased in 17 years. Meanwhile, Bangladesh had 1.5 million emigrants in 2017, compared to 0.98 million in 2000; which is 0.9% of its total population. Most remarkable data is, out of this, 47.3 percentage migrants are female. The Most notable thing is the average age of international migrants for Bangladesh – that is 31.7 years as per the latest data. (Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 25-31) So, it means not only Bangladesh is provided the most skillful young people to the host land, but also it's losing the most active working force in its own land.

Another key fact is, in 2018, out of 734,181 overseas employment category-wise Bangladesh supplied 43.25%, skilled employee. However, the total number of employees in 2018 got lesser compared to the previous year's 1 million plus, which was the highest in a calendar year for Bangladesh in history. But, the alarming sign is only 0.36% of employees are professional out of this tally; where else 38.55% are less-skilled. (BMET) That suggests Bangladesh is running behind to create skilled and graduate professional.

Bangladeshis are scattered all over the world and according to UN data people of Bangladeshi origin have been living in 89 countries in 2013. Countries and zones like USA, Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Korea etc. have so many Bangladeshis. But, most of Bangladesh's remittances come from the Middle East as because this region holds the maximum numbers of Bangladeshi migrants, who are basically workers, day laborers and they have been classified as 'foreign workers'. (Etzold and Mallick)

Now, it's time to ensure big investment of Bangladeshis from other parts of the world to the homeland. In the past, the expats contributed a lot and they can contribute in the future also, where Bangladesh government's initiatives will be key. Till now, the amount of external money Bangladesh does get, financially it helps the families of the Diasporas in the homeland. But, if we look at a bigger picture, it reduces the pressure and burden of the states and government also to take care of its certain citizens. So there contribution should be celebrated in a grand mode.

5. Contributions of Bangladeshi diaspora to political history

Not to mention though, the contribution of the Bangladeshi Diasporas during the anti-Pakistan movement, in the time of Bangladesh War of Liberation and aftermath of 1971 should be highly discussed. They helped the political leaders, they raised charity fund from all over the world to help the oppressed and what not. Who would forget about the famous 'Concert for Bangladesh' held in Madison Square, New York, USA on 1 August 1971 to raise benefit funds and create international awareness for the war refugees. Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan, who were from India, but had ancestral root in Bangladesh, both played key roles along with George Harrison. (Zahrah) Often, the Bangladesh government decided to felicitate them as 'freedom fighters'. (Sun Online Desk)

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the eventual founding father of the state of Bangladesh, went to London on 23 October 1969 to seek support and do campaign among the Bengali expats. There the Diaspora people encouraged him to go forward. Previously they helped to send famous British Lawyer Sir Thomas Willams to erstwhile East Pakistan to advise the local lawyers in challenging the tribunal of the infamous 'Agartala Conspiracy Case', which was filed by the General Ayub Khan authority against 35 Bengali persons where Sheikh Mujib was the number one accused. This case was existed from 6 January 1968 to 22 February 1969 after facing huge sedition and after Sheikh Mujib was freed, the intensity of anti-Pakistan movement got better and better. So, this how the Diaspora community was involved throughout the whole scenario of the independence movement of Bangladesh. (Khan)

Diaspora community has glorified another historical year of Bangladesh. It was the Diasporas who initiated to have the recognition of the historic and heroic 21st February as the 'International Mother Language Day'. History says, on 21 February 1952, several students and young people sacrificed their lives in Dhaka University Campus in demanding their Mother tongue as one of the state language of then Pakistan. Several times Pakistan oppressors denied this demand and on the climax of 21 February 1952, when students violated section 144, police shoot on rallies and killed Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiur etc. A rare history to sacrifice life for

establishing mother tongue as a state language was made that day.

Coincidentally, after 46-48 years of that unexpected event, two Bangladeshi born Canadian persons, who took initiatives to uplift this heroic history in the world stage, their nicknames were as same as two martyrs Rafiq and Salam – Rafiqul Islam and Abdus Salam respectively. (Khan) It was Rafiqul Islam who wrote a significant letter to the then Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Anan on 9 January 1998 to commemorate this day as it is observed today. Rafiq along with his friend Salam then established a foundation named ‘The Mother Language Lovers of the World’. As per the advice of Kofi Anan, they along with some other international members signed a petition to the UN and they contacted to the Bangladesh Government also to take decisive actions. Bangladesh government proposed it with the support of 28 countries, who became the co-proposer. Thanks to these all hardcore activities and actions, on 17 November 1999, the International Mother Language Day was proclaimed at the 152 plenary sessions of the 30th General Conference of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. (Mother Language Lovers of the World Society) Later in 2002, the United Nations General Assembly authorized the proclamation by its resolution. (The United Nations) From 21 February 2000, the day has been observed as ‘International Mother Language Day’ by the United Nations. (UNESCO)

In Bangladesh, it was ‘Shahid Dibas’ (Martyr Day) before 2000, with observing the day as a public holiday since 1953. Now it is regarded as ‘International Mother Language and Martyr Day’. For their enormous contribution, ‘The Mother Language Lovers of the World’ foundation was awarded ‘Ekushe Padak’ (21st Award), the second highest civilian award of Bangladesh, in 2001. Later in 2016, its Founder President Rafiqul Islam was posthumously awarded the highest civilian award ‘Swadhinata Padak’ (Independence Award) by the government of Bangladesh. (Mother Language Lovers of the World Society)

6. Initiatives of Bangladesh government towards diaspora community

Very emphatic is that Bangladesh Government has an exclusive ministry launched in 2001 (Government of Bangladesh 419) to work for this community of abroad, namely Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment, in addition to the Ministry of External Affairs. This is an advantage Bangladesh has, which many countries haven’t, having a ministry on the expatriates. This ministry is the caretaker and coordinator of the government agencies and organizations like Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET, established in 1976), Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Service Limited (BOESL, 1984), Wage Earners’ Welfare Fund (WEWF, 1990) under WEW Board (1990) and Probashi Kalyan Bank (trans. Non-residence Welfare Bank, 2011) etc. (Government of Bangladesh 419)

Most important thing is, the Bangladesh Government, under the authority of this ministry, had introduced a policy for the migrants too in 2016 with the annulment of the ‘Overseas Employment Policy’ of 2006 (Staff Correspondent, bdnews24.com) (Government of Bangladesh 418). Notably, this policy has been linked with the National Skills

Development Policy 2011 and the 7th five-year Plan of 2016-2020 (Haider).

These are the indication that Bangladesh is very concern and conscious about its emigrants and people living overseas. Though the policies and most of the steps Bangladesh has taken are being engaged with the emigrants workers and hardly specifically emphasized on the Diaspora community or the term ‘Diaspora’ not even get official acknowledgement in ministry’s detailed directory (Government of Bangladesh), but the ‘Policy on Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment 2016’ does mention about the Diasporas of Bangladesh. Clause 1.6, entitled ‘Circumference’, of the policy defines [translated from Bengali by this article writer] (Government of Bangladesh 422):

Under the definition of Clause of 2(3) of ‘Overseas Employment and Migrant Act 2013’ migrant workers and Bangladeshi Diaspora community, who have taken or wish to take citizenship of another country, but desire to keep relation with own country and contributing to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh, both categories will be under the jurisdiction of the ‘Policy on Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment 2016’

When this policy got passed in the cabinet on 25th January 2016, the then Cabinet Secretary of Bangladesh Government Mohammad Shafiul Alam said to media that (Staff Correspondent, The Daily Star): ‘...there were specific directives in the new policy for different ministries including those of finance, foreign affairs, home affairs, commerce, and civil aviation and tourism to ensure proper welfare, facilities and safety to migrants.’ Means, Bangladesh government has all the plans and initiatives to ensure the involvement of the Diaspora community to come back home in a process and make an enhanced contribution to the country. Involvements of civil aviation and tourism department in this regard always create a sense of making things happened.

Two more recent examples can be added in this tally of initiatives which are quite significant. Bangladesh has decided to introduce National Identity Card (NID) for the expatriates’, which can open the door to ensure their voting rights and also, ease their livelihood abroad. Many Bangladeshi Diaspora is already directly involved with mainstream politics of homeland having the primary membership of political parties according to their choice of ideology and affiliated with abroad party units of respective countries. Therefore, this voting right would definitely complement their cause.

There was an amendment of related law in 2010 to provide voting rights to Diaspora community (Chowdhury), which was ruled in 1998 by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh (Ittefaq Report). Bangladeshi expatriates in Singapore are going to have the first National Identity Card holders amongst the non-residence Bangladeshi. Singapore would be the model of the pilot project. Gradually Election Commission of Bangladesh, the authority to provide NID, will excess other countries. The decision was revealed in January 2019. Director General of Election Commission NID wing Brigadier General Mohammad Saidul Islam that time told media that, ‘It’s a small country (Singapore). If we succeed there, we will be able to provide the expatriates with NID services in other countries as well.’ (Chowdhury)

Another one is quietly related to ‘brain-drain’ and which is very significant to understand the role of Bangladesh Government towards its highly skilled Diaspora. Bangladesh has initiated the ‘Prime Minister Fellowship’ from 2019 for the first time for Ph.D. researchers and Masters students for Bangladeshis all over the world. Few conditions they have asked to avail this fellowship are absolutely exclusive in manner and character. In condition ^[2], they asked, The candidate’s university or institution should be ranked among the world best 300 universities according to ‘The Times Higher Education World University Rankings’ or ‘QS World University Rankings’ in 2019. Condition ^[15] is saying, the fields of study should be related to increasing the capability of Bangladesh in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Here is the relevant condition ^[11] for our discussion, where it has said, the person who achieves the fellowship, mandatorily will have to come back to Bangladesh and work here at least for two years after finishing the desired study. Any fellowship, scholarship always places an image for itself with the amount stipend to be offered. As for this one, it is the finest fellowship Bangladesh government or any agency from Bangladesh has ever offered, where [condition ^[17] PhD fellow would get 20 Million Bangladeshi Taka (BDT), and BDT 6 Million is to be sanctioned for a Masters fellow for the entire course period. (Government of Bangladesh)

All these circumstances, information and situations are saying, Bangladesh as a homeland, has a mammoth role to play to rediscover her Diaspora power and she is on that pathway to turn that power into achievements and advantages. The only thing it requires is commemoration and reunion for Diaspora community.

7. India has the ‘Mahatma’, History Gifted Bangladesh the ‘Bangabandhu’

As we discussed earlier, Bangladesh is a land of emigrants. So, automatically it has to be one of the prominent lands of world Diaspora. Truly it does. But, in addition to that, Bangladesh has got its famous political entity, who was the architect of its independence in 1971 from Pakistan. He is none other than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one of the best and most popular political leaders of this Indian Sub-continent. Bangabandhu, as he has been famously adorned by his disciples, followers and fans, undoubtedly was a gifted and creative leader; and not only he created history, but also history has created him as the most talked cult figure of Bangladesh.

Coincidentally, as we are talking about migrants and expatriates, independent Bangladesh’s first and provisional government was an ‘Exile Government’, which popularly known as ‘Mujibnagar Government’. It was formed in a place named Mujibnagar (formerly Baidyanathtala) on 10 April 1971 by the elected parliament members of 1970’s from East Pakistan. Its Capital-in-exile was in Kolkata of West Bengal, India. This provisional government led the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Being the President of this government, Bangabandhu was the supreme leader in this war for Bangladesh. (Mujibnagar) However, that time he couldn’t lead the government as because he was arrested and imprisoned by the Pakistan army just after he declared the independence of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) at the early hours on 26 March 1971. Bangladesh fought the war with the image of imprisoned Sheikh Mujib in front as

the commander-in-chief. When Bangladesh got the victory over Pakistan on 16 December 1971, he was in the jail of Karachi. Pakistani rulers agreed to free him and let him come to his motherland after several diplomatic attempts and pressures were made. (Banerjee) At last, on 10 January 1972, almost after a year of incarcerated, he came back to his land from a country which was no more his land; in fact, from 26 March 1971, Pakistan became an abroad alike other countries for all the Bangladeshis. This day has been commemorated as the ‘Home-return of Bangabandhu’ in Bangladesh. (Raju and Alam)

In a rational definition, it has to be considered as the ‘Home-return’ of the greatest ‘Diaspora’ of Bangladesh. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India on 9 January, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Bangladesh on 10 January. So, 10 January may be celebrated as the ‘Diaspora Day’ by welcoming all the Bangladeshi Diasporas around the world to their homeland on the auspicious occasion of home-return of the greatest man in the history of Bangladesh.

In addition to that, Bangabandhu left a chain of the heritage of a Diasporic family. The current Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib’s eldest child, Sheikh Hasina was a Diaspora for a certain period of time, along with his youngest daughter Sheikh Rehana. As she told in an interview in the biofilm scripted on her life, ‘Hasina – The Daughter’s Tale’, her Diaspora life can be divided into two parts – first, April 1969 to late 1970 and second, 30 July 1975 to 17 May 1981. The first one was only due to her husband M.A. Wazed Miah, who went to work in Germany as a Nuclear Scientist. But, the second one was an ideal political asylum life except for the first month. On 30 July 1975, they left home to go to Frankfurt, Germany (erstwhile West Germany), again to join her husband in his workplace. This time her younger sister Sheikh Rehana was with them. Just after 15 days, she left Bangladesh, on 15 August 1975, her whole family was assassinated along with her father by a group of army officers. Luckily, Hasina and Rehana survived thanks to their expat life. During that time they were touring Europe and they just left the Netherlands for Brussels, Belgium. Eventually, they were in Brussels and were taking preparation to go to Paris, when they heard of this tragedy. After the incident, then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi and Marshal Tito of then Yugoslavia call upon the rests of Mujib’s successors to accept asylum in their respective countries. (Khan) After sought refuge in the United Kingdom for a while, they came to Delhi in late 1975. (bdnews24.com New Delhi Correspondent) Indian government offered M.A. Wazed Miah to work in the New Delhi-based Atomic Energy Commission of India until they got back to Bangladesh. (Khan)

Meanwhile, the third generation of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is also engaged with Diaspora life. Hasina’s son Sajeeb Wazed Joy has been in the USA for a long time and he is currently doing the role of honorary ICT advisor of the Prime Minister. (Mahmud) Sheikh Rehana’s eldest daughter Tulip Rizwana Siddiq born in the UK and brought up both in Bangladesh and United Kingdom. (Karim and Karim) She has been a Member of Parliament since 2015 from the British Labour Party. (Neild)

A full family, with having a phenomenon of chain Diasporic life and contributing to a political dynasty, should be an interesting aspect to do further research.

8. Conclusion

The whole analysis would believe and suggest with the data have been provided that, Bangladesh has had very great prosperity and tuning in connecting Diaspora with the homeland. There are many things to offer from both the sides and these require continuous academic research to find out the exact way. But, reality says, 'Diaspora' as a term is not discussed widely in the territory, because there are hardly any academic institutions. Only an exclusive ministry cannot make things easier and their work is not to do academic research, rather do promote academic researches on migration, expats and diaspora; so that government can look for a way, if necessary. Outer world has emphasized a lot in this field. Commemorating 'Diaspora Day' should be under the radar. Bangladesh, being one of the prominent countries and lands of origin for emigrants, should bring institutional fraternity and institutionalized goal to move with the world. The background Bangladesh has regarding migration and diasporic aspects, it becomes obvious to take relevant steps to connect Diasporas with the homeland.

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