

Original article

HOUSE AWAY FROM HOME: A CASE ON MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF THE RESIDENTS OF BIHARI COMMUNITY OF WARD 15 OF DUM DUM MUNICIPALITY, KOLKATA, INDIA

Upasana Pandey^{1*} and Sankha Priya Guha²

ABSTRACT

The word “house” signifies a mere building constructed for people to take shelter in, whereas the word “home” signifies living in a familiar space, where one can feel a sense of belonging associated with it. The concept of “home” is somewhat inscribed within us. This study examines the concept of “house and home” from the point of view of the migrated Bihari community settled in Ward 15 of Dum Dum Municipality in Kolkata. Through observation and interpretation of material traits, social relationships, and the practice of supernatural traits, this paper tries to shed light on the delicate balance the Biharis are maintaining between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to a new socio-cultural environment. The overall study is an interpretive study along with a descriptive analysis. The research model of the study is Qualitative research, which includes directly intensive observation or case studies that result in a narrative descriptive account of a setting or practice.

Further, this study aims to reveal how Biharis in West Bengal have established robust community networks, which enable them to continue their traditions and festivals. They demonstrate significant adaptability, embracing Bengali customs and forming intercultural bonds. This dual process highlights the dynamic nature of identity among migrant populations. This process of migration is an active medium of culture change in the natural domain. It lucidly illustrates the deep attachment of the Bihari community to their traditions and customs, which have not faded away even after migration. In the process of carving out Bihari space amongst the Bengali population, the blended behavior of Bengalis also holds a significant place.

KEY WORDS: Migration, House, Home, Belongingness, Bihari community, Resettlement, Tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The overall development scenario in Bihar has always put the state in the spotlight in debates on regional imbalances, economic development, poverty, etc. The backwardness of this eastern state can be attributed to several elements, including very low agricultural output coupled with a great reliance on agriculture, a greatly distorted distribution of land with landlessness being widespread among peasants, a lack of industrialization, a high population increase, etc. The decades-long period of economic backwardness in the state has resulted in extremely few job possibilities in the small industrial sector.

¹Research student, PG Department of Anthropology, Bidhannagar College, Salt Lake, West Bengal, India

² Associate Professor, PG Department of Anthropology, Bidhannagar College, Salt Lake, West Bengal, India

*Corresponding author: upandey2708@gmail.com

The limited economic resources have also produced insufficient and inadequate public health and educational facilities, which in turn have led to poor state health and educational results. Particularly in the low-skilled labor category, this might be regarded as the most important among the several elements influencing strong out-migration from the state. Comparing the odds for Bihar and other 'Empowered Action Group' states with the odds for other Indian states which was recently studied by Sarkar in 2014. Sarkar used the NSSO(National Sample Survey Organization) 64th round migration data and found that the odds or likelihood of outmigration for employment-related reasons was the highest. The recently released D-series Census 2011 data also shows the same trend, implying that employment-related outmigration is more common in Bihar than anywhere else in India.

The strong out-migration from Bihar reveals the acculturation process. Acculturation is the process by which someone embraces, picks up, and adapts to a new cultural setting following cultural immersion or when another culture is brought to them. This acculturation process helps one to produce new cultural traits within a family. Maintaining one's cultural tradition while adjusting to a new socio-cultural environment is a difficult interaction.

This paper attempts to investigate the difficulties and dynamics experienced by the Bihari migrants in their resettlement process. The challenge is knowing how these immigrants adjust themselves into a different cultural setting by maintaining their traditional practices and cultural identity at the same time, and how this adjusting process influences their sense of belonging and community cohesiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The difference between "house" and "home" has been analyzed by many disciplines apart from anthropology. According to Saunders and Williams (1988), a house is a physical building that offers cover, whereas a home is loaded with emotional and social connotations that reflect personal identity and a sense of belonging. Mallett (2004) investigates this more by talking about how different cultures and people might have very diverse conceptions of home and how it is created. The concept of home often becomes flexible and changing for migratory groups, juggling the place of origin with the new surroundings (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

Berry (1997) describes the process of acculturation through migration. According to Berry, migrants seek to preserve elements of their old culture while adjusting to a new one. The mixed cultural identity is produced by this bi-directional effect.

Deshingkar and Anderson (2004) explain how many Biharis have been compelled to migrate to other states in pursuit of better living due to a lack of employment prospects and inadequate public services. This employment-related migration from Bihar is confirmed by Sarkar (2014) and the D-series Census 2011 data as mentioned earlier.

Basu (2004) Chakraborti (2001) and Appadurai (1996) highlight the preservation of one's cultural legacy in a new socio-cultural environment through migration. Basu (2004) talks about how rituals, social activities, and material culture help migrating people to keep their cultural identity. As Chakraborti (2001) investigates, the Bihari people in Kolkata show this by carrying on their customs and

social events even while absorbing elements of Bengali culture. This dual process of cultural preservation and adaptation reflects the more general dynamics of cultural transformation among migrant groups (Appadurai, 1996). Migrants' cultural practices depend on community networks to be maintained as well as to offer social assistance. Putnam (2000) stresses the need for social capital, in which networks of ties help people reach group objectives. These networks help the Bihari people of Dum Dum Municipality to keep their practices alive and to feel solidarity and belonging (Sen, 2003). Such networks are very important for migrants navigating the difficulties of a new environment while preserving their cultural identity since they enable them to participate in the migration and resettlement process (Levitt, 2001).

For migrating populations, especially, the difference between house and home becomes rather important. According to Ralph and Staeheli (2011), migrants often aim to make their new physical locations "houses" reflecting their cultural identities and offering emotional comfort. For the Bihari immigrants in Kolkata, this entails building a home that connects their cultural background with their new environment (Ray, 2002). Therefore, the concept of home is not only about physical protection but also about a complicated interaction of emotional, cultural, and social elements influencing the sense of belonging and identity of the immigrants (Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

OBJECTIVES

The present study has the following objectives –

1. To examine the concepts of "house" and "home" perceived by the Bihari migrants in Ward 15 of Dum Dum Municipality.
2. To examine the ways the Bihari migrants, preserve their cultural tradition while adjusting to the Bengali socio-cultural environmental surroundings.
3. To observe how community networks amongst the Bihari migrants help them to continue their customs, traditions, and festivals.
4. To observe the material traits, social relationships, and supernatural that the Bihari community preserves.

METHODOLOGY

The study is conducted amongst the migratory Bihari population settled in the Dum Dum Cantonment area of North 24 Parganas. The reason for selecting this particular population is to know how these immigrants combine into a different cultural setting while maintaining their traditional practices and cultural identity. This pattern is studied through their material traits, the dynamics of social relationships, and their supernatural beliefs. The study is mainly an ethnographic study that is carried out using a qualitative approach with a thick description (Geertz, 1973). Also, the overall study is an interpretive study along with a descriptive analysis. The research model of the study is basically qualitative research, which includes directly intensive observation or case studies that result in a narrative descriptive account of a setting or practice. A good example of a qualitative research method would be unstructured interviews, which generate qualitative data through the use of open-ended questions. Due to the research model being qualitative research, the data collecting methods which were used include directly intensive observation, case studies, and unstructured interviews. The unstructured interviews consisted of open-ended questions which allowed the respondent to talk in some depth, choosing

their own words. Thus, using this research model, the population is studied in its natural setting. The result of the qualitative method is a deep understanding of how people perceive their social realities and, in consequence, how they act within their social world.

The collected data is analyzed mainly through qualitative analysis, which involves the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data. Qualitative data analysis is an ongoing, fluid, and cyclical process that happens throughout the data collection stage. However, in spite of the qualitative analysis of the data, quantitative analysis is

also needed to analyze the demographic part of the study.

EMPIRICAL DISCOURSE

Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality in the district of North 24 Parganas of West Bengal has been taken as the study area, and 50 migrated resident Bihari families of U.K. Dutta Road and its adjacent areas are the subject of study. The 50 families are represented by 238 individuals, of whom 117 are males (49.1% of the total population) and 121 females (50.9% of the total population).

In the following Figures 1 and 2, present the cartographic layout of the studied area, both through physical and Google Earth images.

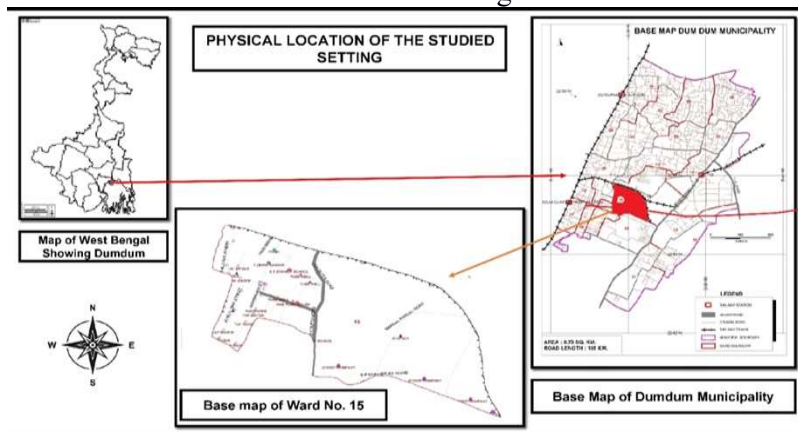


FIGURE 1: Physical Location of the Studied Area (Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality)

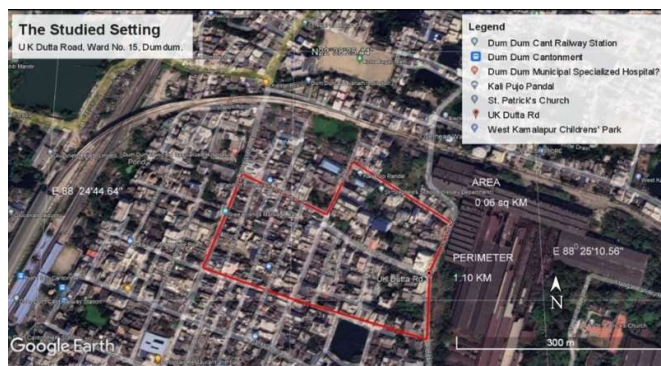


FIGURE 2: Satellite Image (GPS) of Studied Area (Ward 15 under Dum Dum Municipality)

Migration History

Some of the migrated Bihari population settled in the study area has been residing in the place for over a century since the colonial period. The families settled here trace their origins to different districts of Bihar and still frequent their ancestral places. Most of the families studied in the present context immigrated to the locality in the 1960s. A family traced their migration history to 1857 at the time of the first war of independence. Most of the people have migrated due to vocational issues in their previous rural settings. They migrated to an urban area to overcome the financial problems they were facing at their ancestral places.

As stated earlier, the 50 migrated families studied have their ancestral places in different districts of Bihar, including Gaya, Siwan, Chhapra, Aara, and Muzaffarpur. The overall studied population has their ancestral place located in different villages of the aforesaid five districts, the numerical count of which is shown in the following Table 1.

Economic Character

The studied population professes different types of occupations, which include dairy farming or only supply, jobs in the private sector, casual labor, washer man, tea-seller, maid, cook, cab driver, etc. Apart from these occupations, they are involved in other types of businesses, such as scrap business, carpenter, hardware shop-related business electrician, plumber, and home

tutors. Their erstwhile economic hardships in their rural ancestral place have forced them to migrate to a city and continue their traditional occupation or undergo an economic shift in the new location and adapt to a new socio-economic way of life.

Table 1: Numerical Count of The Migrated Families from Respective Districts of Bihar

Sl. No.	Name of the Hailing Place (District)	Families hailing from different districts	
		Number	Percentage
1	Siwan	23	46.0
2	Gaya	08	16.0
3	Chhapra	04	8.0
4	Aara	12	24.0
5	Muzaffarpur	03	6.0
	TOTAL	50	100.0

From the aforesaid occupational categories, the dairy business and the role of a washer man are still being continued from their traditional past and are continuing even after migrating from their ancestral place. The milk business is continued by the milkman community, which belongs to the Ahir caste, whereas the washer man community continues their occupation as they belong to the Dhobi caste. Caste still has a bearing on the economic life of today's urban world. The distribution of the population based on occupation is given in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Population-based on Occupation

Sl. No.	Occupational Category	Male		Female		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.	Daily Labour	12	17.6	02	20	14	17.9
2.	Business	31	45.5	02	20	33	42.3
3.	Service	24	35.2	05	50	29	37.1
4.	Others	01	1.4	01	10	02	2.5
	Total	68	100.0	10	100	78	100.0

From the table given above, it can be stated that out of 238 individuals, 78 (32.7%) are economically engaged in the study area, whereas 160 (66.3%) individuals are still unemployed. The unemployed section includes both students and housewives. The daily labor section consists of 14 individuals, out of which 12 male individuals are engaged in the roles of an electrician, plumber, shop or mill worker, painter, mason, cowshed worker, and van puller, and 2 female individuals work as cooks at different households. The business section has a total of 33 individuals, which is the highest among all the occupational categories. Among 33 individuals, 31 male individuals are involved in land-related businesses, dairy businesses, hardware shop-related businesses, scrap businesses, transport, stationery shops, and garment shop owners. The remaining 2 female individuals own a boutique shop and a factory. The service category consists of 29 individuals, among which 24 are males who are involved in government services, airport-related jobs, watchmen of schools, private firm workers, security guards, and jobs in banks. , remaining 5 are females

who are working at a private firm, practicing nursing, and employed in banks and MNCs. The “other” occupational category consists of 2 individuals, out of whom 1 is a male and 1 is female, both of them are engaged as private tutors.

The immigrants in their native setting stayed involved only in their caste-based occupation. After migrating to the studied setting, they are compelled to shift from their erstwhile caste-based occupation and break the conventional shackles of adhering to caste-based occupation. This can be seen from the engagement of the immigrants in daily labor jobs, keeping aside their caste position. Those engaged in various business activities, except those in the dairy business, are not continuing their traditional occupation at the new location but have initiated new start-ups that the present location is allowing them to sustain. The private tutors present in the area are teaching students, irrespective of their caste and religion, to earn a living. All the immigrants are getting a lot of options in the studied area to earn a living, which was not possible at their hailing place.

Table 3: Numerical Count of Families and Individuals based on caste

Sl. No.	Name of the Caste	Number of families		Number of Individuals	
		Number	%	Number	%
1.	Lohar	02	4.0	05	1.9
2.	Halwai	02	4.0	10	3.9
3.	Nonia	02	4.0	12	4.7
4.	Gwala	04	8.0	21	7.7
5.	Sonar	01	2.0	05	1.9
6.	Dhobhi	02	4.0	23	8.7
7.	Baniya	04	8.0	23	8.7
8.	Brahmin	01	2.0	04	1.2
9.	Kumhar	04	8.0	17	6.9
10.	Chaurasia	05	10.0	21	7.7
11.	Godh	03	6.0	15	6.0
12.	Rajput	12	24.0	58	24.0
13.	Ahir	08	16.0	40	16.7
	TOTAL	50	100.00	238	100.00

Social Identity

In regard to social context, the migrated Bihari community can be further subcategorized into multiple castes, which are shown in the following Table 3. From the table, it is evident from the studied setting that the Rajputs form the majority, whereas the Brahmins count the lowest in number. Among the other castes, the Ahir

and Dhobi are continuing their traditional professions. The other castes have undergone occupational shifts either by their own will or were compelled to leave their caste-based profession.

The caste categories can be hierarchically arranged under the heads of Varna and Jati, as provided in the following Table 4.

Table 4: Hierarchical Division of Varna and Jati

Sl. No.	VARNA	JATI
1.	BRAHMIN	BRAHMIN
2.	KSHATRIYAS	RAJPUT
3.	VAISHYAS	LOHAR, AHIR, KUMHAR, CHAURASIA, SONAR, GWALA, HALWAI
4.	SHUDRAS	NONIA, GODH

From the given Table 4, a framework for the hierarchical system has been established. In this hierarchy, the “Vaishya” is seen to compose the majority of the Jatis.

To understand the family type and size of the 50 studied families settled in the studied area, the following two tables, Tables 5 and 6 are given below.

Table 5: Family Size

TOTAL NO. OF FAMILIES		SMALL FAMILY (1-3 members)		MEDIUM FAMILY (4-6 members)		LARGE FAMILY (7-9 members)		VERY LARGE FAMILY (10 & above members)	
NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%50
50	100	08	16	38	76	04	8	00	-

*Family size classification is based on the classification used by Shah, 1973.

From Table 5, it can be said that the majority of families, i.e. 38 (76%), are medium-sized. It consists mostly of married couples and their unmarried children. The medium-sized families are majority in numbers because either the present head of the family in the studied setting migrated to this locality and then produced a family a few years ago or those people who migrated to this locality in the 1960s or 1970s presently have either returned to their ancestral place, leaving behind their children and their families to

continue living in the studied setting. Following are the small-sized families, which count 8 (16%) in number. The predominant reason for this is that these families consist of either a widow with their unmarried children, unmarried siblings staying together, or a couple staying with their single unmarried child. Only 4 (8%) families are large. The large families had migrated from their ancestral place in the 1960s to the 1970s and are continuing their stay over generations.

TABLE 6: Family Type

TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES		NUCLEAR FAMILY		EXTENDED FAMILY		INCOMPLETE FAMILY	
NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
50	100	37	74	10	20	03	50

From Table 6, the majority of the families numbering 37 (74%) are of nuclear type. Those who have migrated to this location are staying only with their families because of economic hardship. If the first-generation migrant is now deceased or has returned to the ancestral place, his successors continue their nuclear families with their spouses and unmarried children. Only 10 (20%) families are of the extended type consisting of married couples together with their married children and grandchildren. Only 3 (6%) families are incomplete, out of which one consists of unmarried siblings, the second consists of a widow and her unmarried children, and the third consists of a widow, her nephew, and an unmarried son.

The predominant form of marriage observed in the migratory Bihari population in the studied area is marriage by negotiation. Out of the 50 families included in this study, 96% of the marriages were arranged in this manner. Only two couples had love marriages, making up the remaining 4%. Of these two, one was an inter-caste marriage, while the other was an inter-community marriage. Marriage by negotiation is the most common practice, and these marriages are generally arranged at the ancestral homes of the migratory Bihari families rather than in their current urban residences. Dowry is a significant factor driving these arranged marriages, as the groom's family agrees to the match only if the bride's family meets their dowry demands. Typically, the dowry includes cash ranging from ₹30,000 to ₹1,00,000, along with furniture, utensils, jewelry for

both bride and groom and gifts for family members. The amount of dowry depends on the groom's occupation and family background.

For migratory Biharis, dowry demands are influenced by their move to urban areas and employment opportunities in the city. Families with sons tend to choose brides from rural areas, believing that village girls are more responsible and better suited for household duties. These arranged marriages take place at their ancestral homes, where kin members can perform various marriage rituals and the families can benefit from the comforting atmosphere of their hometowns. In contrast, families with daughters prefer to find grooms from urban areas with stable jobs or businesses, and the dowry amount is often linked to the groom's occupation and family wealth. Arranged marriages are often facilitated by kin members or trusted friends who help connect both families.

OBSERVATION

Examining the Bihari people in Ward 15 of Dum Dum Municipality reveals a complicated interaction between traditional preservation and adaptability in their new socio-cultural surroundings. Once settled in West Bengal, the Bihari immigrants sought to preserve their culture in the new metropolitan area. Their traditional culture is constantly reproduced in many spheres of material and social aspects within the surrounding Bengali society. After arriving in West Bengal, Bihari immigrants have maintained a strong sense of cultural identity through diverse means of food, clothing, language,

marriage, spatial organization, and religious rites. These initiatives underline their will to protect their cultural tradition.

Food:

One of the most notable findings is the continuation of custom clothing codes and eating customs. With delicacies like litti-chokha fundamental to their daily and festival diets, Bihari migrants keep cooking their local cuisine using traditional techniques¹. Women in society use conventional draping techniques for sarees, therefore expressing a clear trace of their cultural identity. Maintaining traditional food and dressing behaviors not only helps to maintain their legacy but also reminds us daily of their roots.

A (F, 45) has been residing in the studied area for about 20 years and said that she has learned to cook different types of Bihari food at her native place in the Chhapra district. She continues to cook food in the traditional Bihari method even in West Bengal as they don't prefer the Bengali recipe and cooking style on an everyday basis. Litti-Chokha still remains her favorite and commonly practiced recipe. She adheres to the cultural rules associated with cooking traditional recipes during their festivals. This middle-aged woman along with other female immigrants of similar age is continuing their traditional Bihari style of draping Indian Saree.

Language:

The way the Bihari immigrants utilize language emphasizes even more their attempts to maintain cultural uniqueness. There is obviously a clear linguistic barrier, as shown by the prevalent usage of Bhojpuri in homes and the resistance of many women to learning Bengali. This practice highlights gender variations in the need to interact with the local language for occupational objectives as well as strengthens their cultural identification.

B (M, 40) was born and brought up in this locality. His grandfather was the first person

in his family to immigrate to this locality. Being a representative member of the 3rd Generation living in Bengal post-migration, he said that his family members still talk in Bhojpuri amongst themselves. His wife and other female members haven't learned to speak Bengali and have no intention of learning it in the near future. For him, it is a Pardesi language which is not mandatory to learn. The men of the family work to earn a living and thus understand and speak Bengali as much as required. The 4th generation of the family speaks both Bhojpuri and Hindi amongst themselves and in Bengali with the Bengalis.

Marriage:

Among the Bihari immigrants, marriage customs expose a great respect for conventional standards. Along with the ongoing dowry practice, the community's opposition to inter-caste and inter-community marriages emphasizes very strong cultural values. Marital symbols like vermilion and toe rings have great religious and cultural value, which emphasizes even more the community's will to preserve its customs in its surroundings.

C (F, 46) said that her family is completely against the concept of Inter-caste or Inter-community marriage. If any girl or boy violates the rule, they completely isolate them from their family. The reason for isolating them is that they feel ashamed to show their face in their native place in Bihar. They would have to go through a lot of insult and embarrassment if their son or daughter violated the marital rule. They believe that marriage should be arranged by their kinsmen so that they can get a sense of confidence about the other family. They also feel that if marriage takes place with all the traditional marital rituals, then the bride and groom can get the blessings of God and other family members which will make the marriage successful. Bihari tradition of choosing the bride or groom within the same caste is still continuing. Dowry is a hallmark concept

within the Bihari community which is not just confined to rural space but very much operative in relocated urban areas as well. With marriage, comes the marital symbols, such as “piyarsenur” (Yellow vermillion), “Senhora” (Box for keeping the yellow vermillion), and “Bichua” (Toe ring) used and worn by the Bihari women after marriage. These symbols are considered sacred and if anything happen to these symbolic components, then they anticipate some misfortune to happen to the husband.

Purity and Pollution:

Living environments among the Bihari immigrants show traditional ideas about pollution and purity. Strategically placed kitchens and worship spaces help to preserve these differences. This spatial layout not only upholds cultural standards but also gives the migrants a familiar and reassuring environment, therefore strengthening their sense of identification and belonging.

D (F, 55) said that when their 2 storied building was under construction, she designed the floors particularly the kitchen and worship area to be adjacent to each other and the washroom was planned at a distance from the kitchen and the worship area maintaining the polarity between purity and pollution. She even considered the position of the worship area and kitchen in such a way that it doesn't affect the “vaastu” of the house. She was very particular in keeping the sacred items at her house. For her, the positions also played a vital role in the sleeping and dining activities. She has also imposed various restrictions on her family members while entering the worship area and kitchen so that the purity of the location doesn't get polluted.

Supernatural practices:

The cultural continuity of the Bihari people depends much on religious activities, especially the celebration of Chhath Puja. Together with the accompanying customs and cultural expressions, the shared celebrations of this

holiday foster a great feeling of unity and belonging. The celebration acts as a strong link to their cultural roots and changes their surroundings to bring them back to their native Bihar.

E (M, 35), said that they have celebrated “Chhath Puja” for about 20 years now in West Bengal, right from the time his father migrated here. He says that, during Chhath Puja, it seems that they are in Bihar itself. The hustle in the market, the chhath songs playing all over on loudspeaker, doesn't make him feel that he is not at his native place. The whole Bihari community comes together and celebrates the festival together in his residential locality.

Community sentiment:

The Biharis preserve their cultural tradition and identity through a strong sense of community sentiment. The community network and sentiment help them to maintain their existence amongst the Bengalis, who are the dominant ones. It makes them feel at “Home” even in a place they consider merely a “House”. This identity maintenance comes along with conflicts between the Bihari and Bengali communities.

F (F, 60) is a Bengali woman, who lives in a 2 BHK flat and her immediate neighbor is a Bihari family who shares the same floor. She doesn't have a friendly bond with the family as for her, the Bihari family doesn't prefer Bengali people. The Bihari woman very frequently tries to get into arguments with the informant even in small and casual matters. According to her, the Bihari woman is not educated as she was married at a very early age in Bihar and hence, she doesn't try to understand things in a mature way. She also doesn't like her voice tone as it's quite high with her at times of argument.

Apart from the conflicts, cultural admixture can also be observed between the above-mentioned communities.

G (M, 50) a Bengali man, said that the majority of Bihari families live in his colony. He said that he maintains friendly

relationships with a few Bihari families and they invite him to their houses during different festivals. They often send Bihari food to his house and he loves to have them. He mentioned especially about Chhath puja, during which the Biharis invited them to their houses to have the Prasad or offerings. They even deliver the "Thekuas" (Cookies made out of jaggery and flour) as the Prasad of chhath puja at his house. He said that the only problem he faces during different Bihari festivals is the access to the market. During their festivals, the market becomes crowded and it becomes really difficult to get the necessary items. All the shops, irrespective of their niches, start selling festival-related items. Even transport gets hampered due to blockage of roads, especially, in Chhath Puja.

Maintaining their cultural identity depends much on the strong sense of community feeling and strong networks of the Bihari people. These networks enable the community to negotiate relocation difficulties, support social change, and enable the continuation of cultural customs.

H (F, 45) is a Bengali woman, who lives in a slum present in the studied area. She and her family are the only Bengali family living in that settlement. The rest of the houses are resided by Bihari families. She says that the Biharis being the majority in the area, often dominate in different situations. She said that she doesn't like their accent as it sounds very rough. The Bihari families often try to indulge in fights on silly topics such as on usage of the common tap, the usage of the common bathroom present in the slum area, space for cleaning utensils, etc. If any heated argument takes place between her and any of the Bihari family, the whole Bihari community comes in solidarity and starts supporting one other. Hence, she tries not to avoid them as far as possible.

The strong sense of communism amongst the Biharis leads to a sense of insecurity amongst the Bengalis. Being dominant in the area, they don't want to get outnumbered due to the Biharis whom

they consider as "outsiders". The adaptability of the community helps them to keep their customs while establishing a feeling of home in different surroundings.

I (F, 50), said that if she wants to buy a traditional Bengali "taant" saree, she won't be getting one in the market adjacent to her residence in the studied area. She says that the shops only sell the Bihari-preferred sarees. There is not even a single shop selling traditional Bengali "taant" saree. She said that at times of Bihari festivals, the whole market gets busy selling the festival-related commodities and it becomes really difficult for her to get the daily requirements. Recently, her daughter got married during which she was not able to meet even the smallest needs for the marriage from the local market. She said that there are more than 10 shops selling items required for sacred rituals in the local market and not even a single shop from them is owned by a Bengali proprietor. The majority of items present in the shop are meant for Bihari sacred rituals. This is too disheartening for the informant as the whole Bengali culture is traits are getting disturbed by the settlement of Biharis.

Ultimately, by combining traditional customs with communal cooperation, the Bihari immigrants in Ward 15 of Dum Dum Municipality have been able to effectively preserve their cultural identity. Their attempts to protect their tradition in a different socio-cultural setting show how fluid cultural identity is among migratory communities.

The paper emphasizes for migrating populations the need for cultural practices, community networks, and spatial organization to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

CONCLUSION

The study of the Bihari population in Ward 15 of Dum Dum Municipality, Kolkata, demonstrates the complex balance they keep between respecting their traditional legacy and adjusting to a new socio-

cultural setting. A strong sense of cultural identification among the Bihari migrants is shown by their dedication to preserving their traditional food habits, dress patterns, language, marriage practices, spatial structure, and religious rites. These customs not only help to preserve culture but also give their life lives consistency and continuity.

The Bihari people have shown great resiliency and adaptation in spite of difficulties and disputes with the native Bengalis. Their cultural traditions are maintained by their strong community networks and solidarity. Celebrating festivals like *Chhath Puja* helps them develop a strong sense of unity and belongingness.

The dual process of culture preservation and adaptation among the Bihari immigrants emphasizes the dynamic character of identity among migrating groups. Although the group works to preserve its unique cultural identity, events of cultural interaction and mutual regard with the Bengali population indicate a possible assimilation and mutual adaptation. This interaction of cultural preservation, conflict, and admixture emphasizes the difficulties and possibilities of cultures coexisting in a varied society.

By maintaining their cultural identity and developing a strong sense of community, the Bihari migrants in Dum Dum Municipality have ultimately negotiated the complexity of migration and resettlement. Their experience of settling their “house” away from “home” emphasizes the need of cultural practices and community networks to preserve a sense of belonging and identity for migrating populations.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Basu, A. (2004). Material Culture and Social Identities in the Migrant Context. *Journal of Material Culture*, 9(3):313-331.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1): 5-34.
- Blunt, A., & Dowling, R. (2006). *Home*. Routledge, London.
- Chakrabarti, A. (2001). Migration and Cultural Continuity: The Bihari Community in Kolkata. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 62(2): 212-228.
- Deshingkar, P., & Anderson, E. (2004). People on the Move: New Policy Challenges for Increasingly Mobile Populations. *Natural Resource Perspectives*, 92,:1-2.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books, New York.
- Levitt, P. (2001). *The Transnational Villagers*. University of California Press, California.
- Mallett, S. (2004). Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature. *The Sociological Review*, 52(1): 62-89.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Ralph, D. & Staeheli, L. A. (2011). Home and Migration: Motilities, Belongings and Identities. *Geography Compass*, 5(7): 517-530.
- Ray, K. (2002). The Migrant Home: Intersections of Identity and Belonging. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 23(1): 73-85.

- Sarkar, S. (2014). Migration from Bihar: Patterns, Causes and Consequences. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(13): 54-62.
- Saunders, P., & Williams, P. (1988). The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda. *Housing Studies*, 3(2): 81-93.
- Sen, A. (2003). The Bihari Migrant Network in Kolkata: Social Capital and Community Resilience. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 31(1): 105-123.
- Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (2004). *Landscape, Race and Memory: Material Ecologies of Home*. Ashgate Publishing, London.