

Performance in quest of identity of the Bangladeshi diaspora community in Britain

Sudip Chakroborthy

Abstract:

This research project involves discovering how the Bangladeshi diaspora community in Britain is encoding and decoding 'identity' in the twenty first century. The goal is to understand that the Bangladeshi diaspora community was memorialized by the actions of the Britain society since 1970s. This has been done by examining events such as the workshops, theatre rehearsals, performance practices in London, Birmingham, Oldham and Glasgow in the form of a dialogue, exchange of emails, interviews, photos and curated conversations with actors, spectators and scholars, documentation of performance practices. Two performance events will be examined in this study. These are: *Brick Lane '78* and *Bhasha: The Glasgow Language Festival*.

The play named *Brick Lane '78* is based on the 70's racially motivated attack and violence on the Bangladeshi diaspora community and the protest and recognition in Britain. The play has been written by Murad Khan, performed by the professional, semi-professional British performers, and produced by the Purbamat CIC in Birmingham. The second one is *Bhasha: The Glasgow Language Festival* with the focus on the language movement in 1952 based performance, seminar, talk and exhibition in Glasgow. The British-Bangladeshi community in Glasgow named Bangladesh Association Glasgow with the core plan and coordination by Saif D. Khan and Nasir Uddin that aims to perform for the wider community in February 2019 in the UK.

Upon examination of these events, it becomes clear that a portion of the Bangladeshi diaspora community attempts to revisit and represent the history of the language movement in 1952, the liberation war in 1971 and the history of racially motivated attack, violence, protest and recognition in 1970s Britain to emphasise their presence in the society as well as a vibrant plural society. This essay highlights the importance of the community's activities of performing arts in shaping the actions of the Bangladeshi diaspora identity in Britain.

Keywords: Diaspora, identity, violence, performance and plural society.

Introduction

Identity and politics are closely intertwined in performance research, and both crosscut different theoretical lines and areal traditions. Even when not explicitly central to a specific study, performance theorists always work with models of identity, whether in the form of localized group identities of culture, language, or ethnicity, or in the form of aspects of individual identity such as gender, age, sexuality, or social role or status. Politics is similarly universally at issue in performance studies (Hunter-Gatherers, Ancient, 2008).

In the following essay I will explore what, borrowing the notion of identity from Stuart Hall (1994 & 1996) and Homi K. Bhaba (1990 & 1994), I call the identity politics of diaspora community. Violence, or more to the argument the imagining of violence, and the quest of a 'plural society' plays a central role in this 'making' insofar as a political identity is an identity mobilized against a perceived threat. In everyday civil life, identity is a comparatively unfixed positioning that shifts according to the social setting in which those who express it is engaged. To understand the concept of identity, the research explores the Jamaican-born British sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall's study. Hall explains, "identity is not something that is fixed; it is in constant flux informed by various and sometimes

contradictory social practices. We construct our identity in relation to and within the context of where we are. [...] any identity is more of a process of becoming, rather than being" (1996, p. 4). However, the aspect of Hall's work that is most significant to this study is the insights he makes into the wide-ranging apparatuses of identity and politics. Similarly, for identification, Bhaba states, "identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (1994, p. 51). Following Geraldine Finn's (1992) argument, Ahmed says, "We are always more and less than the categories which name and divide us" (2011, p. 279). From a postnational position Ahmed contextualises the notion of 'identity', Ahmed argues,

We are always more and less than a woman, a man, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Bangladeshi, a Pakistani, an Indian, a Taliban, a Bengali, a Bihari, a Chakma, a proletariat, a capitalist, ... always submerged in a process of becoming, always on a line of fluctuation, always separated by a gap from this or that axiom constituting the category of a nation" (p. 279).

Thus identity is networked and continuously reconstructed. By using theories cited above, the study seeks contemporary relevance by uplifting the notions and placing these in the context of identity politics that Bangladeshi diaspora faces and questions - the Britain plural society with which the identity is constructed.

However, whilst it has been demonstrated that identity and performing arts are closely intertwined in many different contexts, it has also been shown that performing arts are involved in the construction of a much more complex range of collective identities.

This study also aims to understand the notion of diaspora¹ that refers to a dispersed population resulting from the voluntary or involuntary movement of a social group from its homeland to settlement in at least two other locations. A music and media studies researcher Nabeel Zuberi describes, "Diaspora discourse reveals the historically contingent, flexible, and contested meanings of the term. In many respects, the diaspora concept anticipates and addresses broader issues of communication flows, cultural affinities, and political solidarities in an increasingly networked world" (Zuberi, 2011, p. 1040-1044). From his own experience, observation and study Hall defines the diaspora experience "not by essence or purity, but by a recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' that lives with and through, not despite, difference; but *hybridity*." Affective and performative diaspora identities are those "which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1994, p. 235).

Situated within a postcolonial tradition, Bhaba's *The Location of Culture* (1994) explores questions of identity by developing the concept of hybridity – and its related notions of third space and the in-between – has gained considerable currency as a counter-language to the constructedness of national identity. With these terms, Bhaba promotes a politics of cultural encounter where new forms of identity are advanced to contradict hegemonic representations constructed by colonial authorities. British academic researcher Sarah Maitland (2016) and Gabe Mythen (2012) analysed Bhaba's idea. Following their explanation, "Hybridity" has

¹ According to C. Voicu (2013), "Diaspora (namely a collective memory and myth about the homeland) refers to those social groups that share a common ethnic and national origin, but live outside the territory of origin. These groups have a strong feeling of attachment to their "homeland", making no specific reference to ethnicity, or to a particular place of settlement. All Diasporas, either independent of national and ethnic background or treated as a single group in which ethnical boundaries are crossed are considered as being hybrid and globally oriented" (p. 161).

been defined as the site as resistance and negotiation, fusion and bricolage, "the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other". Bhaba proposes the concept of the "third space", as the space for hybridity. It is this interstitial space betwixt the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized that Bhaba sees as disruptive of oppressive structures and practices. But hybridity is also the space where all binary divisions and antagonisms, typical of modernist political concepts including the old opposition between theory and politics, cease to hold. According to Bhaba:

in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities (1994, p. 5).

From my active participation in the UK diaspora community's performing arts sphere and in creating the theatre productions in London, Birmingham and Glasgow, I anticipate exploring in this study, how is Bangladeshi identity imagined by the Bangladeshi diaspora community and discovering how the diaspora community is encoding and decoding 'identity' in the twenty first century in Britain. Therefore, the study has been conducted through the lenses of diaspora, hybridity, and third space theories.

What I will take from the 'politics of identity' and the diverse generations 'performing arts practices' that inform 'identity' and address 'violence' and 'recognition' in the context of Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK, I observe and present in this essay, I will acknowledge, aims to inform by my subject position and only partial, in that what I may construct and produce is both 'subjective' and 'part' of the whole, and that as Bhaba says, "the true is always marked by the ambivalence of the process of emergence itself, ... within the terms of a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements" (1994, p. 22).

***Brick Lane '78* by Purbanat CIC, Birmingham**

In the book 'Theatre & Nation', Holdsworth focuses her analysis on how has theatre engaged with the nation-state and helped to formulate national identities, and what impact have migration and globalisation had on the relationship between theatre and nation. In light of this Holdsworth argues, "This is no more evident than in the growing global diaspora of people traversing national borders as economic migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees. Despite all this, the nation has remained remarkably persistent as a political, social and economic force" (2010, p. 11). In this context, the 2018s theatre production named *Brick Lane '78* can be considered a re-examination of the Bangladeshi diaspora community's political history of resistance and recognition, and root to a statement of unity and harmony in Britain that is currently in a revival instance of exclusionary practices of the xenophobic political context. The play is based on the racially motivated attack, violence, and resistance that recognises the diaspora society in 70's Britain.

In the context of recent revival instance of exclusionary practices of the xenophobic politics, the 2018s theatre production named *Brick Lane '78* can be considered a re-examination of the Bangladeshi diaspora community's political history of resistance and recognition, and root to a statement of unity and harmony in Britain. The play is based on the racially motivated attacks on the diaspora society in 1970s Britain, and the responding resistance. The play is written by Murad Khan, performed by professional, semi-professional and community actors from diverse background including the UK based Bangladeshi diaspora actors, and UK and Bangladesh based off-stage performers. Birmingham based community theatre company 'Purbanat' produced this play. Initially, Birmingham City Council and Black Country Touring supported this project (Purbanat, 2018). Besides, the play had a countrywide tour in co-

operation with Arts Council England. This performance relates to the identity politics of Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain.



Brick Lane '78; poster design: Arup Baul



Brick Lane '78; photo: Big Frogs Ltd. UK

The West Midlands-based Purbanat was established in Birmingham in 2012 and registered as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2014 that aims to discover, nurture, produce stories from the widest range of backgrounds and present their work to the highest possible standards (Purbanat, 2018). One of the key characteristics of this company's productions is to revisit the diaspora history and look back to their migration, work, business, living from the mid-20th century when Post-war Britain needed labour to rebuild the economic infrastructure and that time many immigrants came from Commonwealth nations. Following these sources, the play has been shaped to specifically open a platform to understand the politics of identity in 1970s Britain in co-operation with the playwright, performers, throughout the conversations with the then anti-racist activists and with a small portion of Bangladeshi diaspora society living in London and Birmingham. Moreover, the public engagement experience through a traditional theatre presentation, audience feedback during the Q&A session, in-person meeting and Facebook posts-comments contribute to understand how this history of violence and intimidation affects peoples' memory. The practice also opens passages to study the conflict between the secular activities that enhance Bengali cultural identity through socio-cultural

activities and foundation of monuments and the religious activities that promotes Islamic identity in Britain. The two opposite direction aims to control over social and political space of the community. However, according to J. Eade and D. Garbin, "the direction toward the Islamic identity is growing" (Eade and Garbin, 2006, p. 181-193).

Throughout 60s-70s Britain was marked by spread of racism. "... within a localised backdrop of alienation, discrimination, racial exclusion, disaffection and a working-class reality" the incidents of attack, injury, harassment and bullying on the immigrant people and their children were often occurred on the street, in the workplace, school, playground, even during a stay in the home (Hoque, 2018, p. 184). In several intimate and informal discussions diaspora people said, they do not want to remember these painful memories but still they are carrying these invisible marks. They are the then working-class immigrants who came from Bangladesh to earn a living. People forget those memories of suffering for their successor's better future that brings political and professional association with and within this society. The memory of anger and deprivation in them was very deep (Miah, 2018). Once these surged up, which was immediately after the murder of Altab Ali. On 4th May 1978, a twenty five year old young textile worker from Bangladesh named Altab Ali who was murdered by three teenagers in a senseless and racially motivated attack in a park in Whitechapel that now bears his name. The news of this killing spread quickly in the city and protests got tense. As a result, a demonstration with the coffined dead body made a statement of protest and resistance against the long history of denial to the diaspora community in Britain. It described the people's position in the movement with a demand for justice and recognition. Various forms of protest, rally and marches took place. People from diverse background and organisations participated in public meetings, street rallies and sit-in protests (Peters, 2018). In fact, the movement mobilised both the Bengali and wider communities to take a stand

against hatred and intolerance. A young migrant's death had opened the window of courage and race relations (Dey, Daily Prothom Alo, 2018).

This play is a diaspora society's political statement about a history of living and working in Britain with dignity and identity. The playwright described the play as a history-centred fiction (see Appendix A), and the on-stage and off-stage performers were keen to perceive the story that transformed them into questioner and imaginative to perform the fiction in a more convincing way. Importantly, today's artists are from diverse background, citizens of Britain, some of them with good financial status, some of them struggling. This diverse group is articulating the characters and events from history including the working-class migrant, British trade union rep, followers of National Front and British Police. Creating a bridge between time and diversity was meaningfully done.

Initially, the script was biased to spot the 'white' supremacy and less emphasis on the notion of peace, harmony and unity. On the 13 January 2018, the theatre team began the rehearsal in Birmingham. The floor initiated an intensive daylong discussion and debate to revise the script. Despite a few changes in the primary script, it was distinctly manifesting the history only. In a personal conversation, the playwright and producer Murad Khan said, "I want to say what really happened, I do not want to escape. I want to draw a mark to the future generation that I didn't compromise with my artistic expression and reality" (Khan, 2018). Importantly, a sudden exit of an English couple during the premiere show in Birmingham was questioning the performance, why did the couple leave the auditorium only after ten minutes of the play started? Did the play show a very subjective human experience or a resonance of the exclusion? However, the exact reason behind their leaving couldn't find out. Later, during the rehearsals for the months after show in London, the on stage and off stage performers fully agreed to revise the play and performance to encompass with the notion of

inclusiveness and address the audience feedback. These difficulties drove the play director to understand the performance of 'identity'. P. Goff and K. Dunn explains, identity, "fluid, constructed, relational and multiple" (Goff and Dunn, 2004, p. 1-10). Roz Ivanič argues, "identity is constructed in the context of social relations that are always also relations of power, and so the workings of status, prestige and hierarchy will shape how identity is constructed" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 7). He also added identity is networked and continuously reconstructed that is clearly seen in Bangladeshi diaspora's socio-cultural-political involvement in Britain.

The most useful learning resulted from a conversation with a Manchester-based (formerly, a Bangladesh-based theatre activist) community theatre organiser-playwright-performer, Mohammad Tasadduk Hossain. Hossain shared his views about the factors behind the social construction and confusion toward ethnic based cultural identity and religious identity in Britain society. He states, "the 'social construction' and 'confusion' about religious identity happens in both ways: forceful and mutual. This is 'perhaps' a consequence of the political tension and psycho-ideologically motivated undertaking" (Hossain, 2018). Aminul Hoque argues, "British-born Bangladeshi-Muslims continue to experience multiple levels of discrimination and racism at a wider societal level and also within educational institutions" (2018, p. 184). In the play *Brick Lane '78*, the Bangladeshi diaspora characters have experienced similar situation. S. T. Shehabuddin's argument is relevant to the views expressed by Hossain that indicates "the world stage had witnessed massive changes: the systematic weakening of leftists and increased visibility of Islamists, the end of the Cold War and the onset War on terror, and the complex consequences of neoliberalism" (Shehabuddin, 2016, p. 17). Hossain states (2018), "these radical groups trying to take the ground, reach to the followers with the 'single entity' ideology, influence the believers to display the 'religious identity' publicly and leave the ethnic based cultural identity." While, Hoque argues, "Islam

identity played an important role to stage whether in its spiritual, cultural or political guise continues to play of their shaping identities of the third generations" (2018, p. 183). A different view came up during an informal discussion with the Tower Hamlets based (specifically, the East-London mosque based) community organisation named 'Massage Cultural Group'. "This group started in late 1999 and has grown ever since with talented members who are keen to spread its massages throughout the community using the medium of culture and uphold British-Bengali values in order to raise awareness of variety of issues" (SBD, 2018). The actor-director and playwright Muhib Choudhury emphasised that "a well secured life and financial security" and the "unsettle personal relationships and family tie among the British white people" are the reasons behind the growing religious identity of immigrant community in Britain. He says, "This is not growing in Muslims only, but in Hindus and other religious communities too" (Choudhury, 2018).

In this context, the Bangladeshi diaspora Muslims and their British-born offspring hold different views of their identity in Britain. Hall poses particular challenges to define identity that "the claiming of that instability is what makes the second and third generation unique in that they are not allowing themselves to be defined by others or fixed by location any longer, but embracing the totality of their experiences. This is seen in the shift from identity politics to the politics of representation" (2009, p. 47). Similarly, many commentators on globalisation have noted, "British Bangladeshis and other settlers from the South are linked to their countries of origin by telephone, mail, Internet, television and radio so that communication of news is rapid and sustained and results in 'diasporic communities' and a sense of belonging to multiple homes/nations. 'Hyphenated identities' such as 'British-Bangladeshi', 'British-Muslim', British-Asian, etc. have been coined to express these multiple, transnational and diasporic identities and ties" (Garbin, 2005, p. 2).



Brick Lane '78; photo: Big Frogs Ltd UK

In this global context, however, the play resembles race relations and harmony in the current global political context. The intolerance, hatred and psychology of revenge between people increases when there is no strong geopolitical proposition toward an inclusive society. The indications convey through the vote for 'Brexit' in the UK and for 'Donald Trump' in the USA presidential election are real concerns nowadays (Dey, 2018). Are these clearly indicating a global exclusionary milieu? The play has the possibility to highlight these issues through performing human relations, socio-political learning, testimony and arguments against the revival of an exclusionary impulse worldwide. The argument is open for the political scientists since the diaspora communities are performing beside or among the wider community as many of the elected members and representatives are holding position to the British House of Commons, local government, political parties and public services who belongs to the Bangladesh ethnic identity.

In order to illustrate an artistic response to the 1970s Britain, the play brought about thirteen scenes of nine different locales and twelve on stage characters related to the racially motivated attack, violence, damage, protest, mobilize and assemble the Bengali diaspora society, as well as wider community together and bring them on the streets of London, as

well as the characters to resist the protest. The seven British actors from four different ethnic backgrounds perform the twelve different characters of the play "to convince" the audience about the (hi)story, "to mark identity" of Bangladeshi diaspora society, as well as "to make it beautiful" (Schechner, 2002, p. 38-39). However, the performance team was enthusiastically participated in those moments of the creative challenge to portray a forgotten history of resistance and identity politics of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain.

The play was premiered on the evening of February 11, 2018, at the Birmingham Midland Arts Centre (MAC) in presence of a multicultural audience. However, most of the audiences were from Bangladeshi diaspora community, as well as the 1970s activist. The significance of the play was understood at the end of the play, when the different age people's silent tears came out with a standing ovation. They participated in the Q&A session and shared their untold and unfolded histories and difficulties as a testimony. Konor Miah, the then activist attended a rehearsal session and two public shows in Birmingham and London. He commented after the premiere show, "it has effectively used the time and space, and performers from the diverse background done an outstanding job" (Miah, 2018). Immediate after the opening show, the director received audience feedback about the content, play design, acting, and etc. Also, the team received feedback via Facebook that can be summarised with some specific notes, such as: "it is interesting that the play unfolds the untold story, though it requires more information and accuracy" (Mithu, 2018), "brilliant acting, using the minimal set prop in a creative way in a stage production, outdid the audience's expectations" (Farhana, 2018), "an actor had over acted in his characterization, some actors forgot their lines" (Adamji, 2018), "the design and application of music, sound, light, set and set props were palpable, and to expand the length of the play the traditional storytelling method or narrative style can be followed" (Musgrave, 2018). However, it is to

mention that the house-full audiences were fully involved with the stage action during the premiere show that may consider as an achievement.

Bhasha: the Glasgow Language Festival by Bangladesh Association Glasgow



Flag March in Glasgow on 28 March 1971; photo courtesy: Saif D. Khan

Established in 1971 during the war of independence, the Bangladesh Association Glasgow (BAG 2018) has been a platform for Bangladeshis in Glasgow for their welfare and to be their voice. Its aim has always been to propagate Bangladeshi culture and be an advocate for tolerance, social justice and entrepreneurship - some of the essential Bangladeshi values. For years the association remained true to these values and built up an impressive archive of cultural, social and charitable work. Since 2013 it has adopted a slightly changed ethos of actively expanding and engaging the mainstream Scottish society in its work. This was deemed necessary due to changes that have happened in the world as a whole.

The citable achievements of the BAG in recent years are, celebration programme of the XX Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014, *Borshoboron* (Bengali New Year celebration) with an exhibition of the artworks by noted Bangladeshi *Pot-chitri* (scroll painter) Roghunath Charkroborty in 2015 and perform a theatre production MEMORi, based on the three true events of the 1971's liberation war of Bangladesh, which was created in co-operation with theatrEX Bangladesh, as part of the National Theatre of Scotland's 10th anniversary, titled

HOME/AWAY in 2016. Furthermore, BAG presented the 'Bangladesh Victory Day' in the Scottish Parliament for the first time in history in 2016. Since 2017 BAG has started Healthy Living Lifestyle programme that is motivated by the philosophy of healthy approach towards life as a whole sponsored by the Royal Navy, and involved with variety of charitable work and publishing of a literary magazine titled *Jora Shanko*.

Recently, BAG is engaged with the *Bhasha: the Glasgow Language Festival* in co-operation with GlasgowLife, UNSECO, SCILT and the British Councils of Scotland and Bangladesh (Khan, 2018; Uddin, 2018). In an email conversation President of BAG, Saif Khan states, idea of creating this festival, “what we do with this massive legacy of Bangladeshis in a land which we have made our adopted 'home' - that is a question I asked myself every time when this topic kept coming up (Khan, 2018). In an unstructured interview with Nasir Uddin, the General Secretary of the organisation, points out various logistical implications about timing of the event etc. He even thinks about continuing with a yearly festival of some sort afterwards to create a Bengali legacy in Scotland. The way Khan and Uddin (2018) sees *Bhasha* is three fold: 1) this legacy will be making 21 February a national day in Scotland and UK; 2) to have a Shaheed Minar in Glasgow; and 3) continue with celebrating this program as an annual festival.



Logo: *Bhasha: the Glasgow Language Festival*



Provaat Pheri 2018; photo courtesy: Saif D. Khan

In order to hold *Bhasha Shaheed Dibash (Language Martyrs Day)* in Scotland, BAG emphasises on the gravitas and the intellectual appeal of this special day. In an open letter, Khan rejects the idea of celebration and recalled his memory. He says, "In my young 18 year old student mind, in this 50 year old body - this day was never a celebration. It is a day when a nation screamed to the bigger world in protest - from years of 'other people' telling them who they are and how they should perform. This led to the creation of *Amar Ekushey Boi Mela* (Book fair of the immortal twenty first February), which triggered a cultural movement where a host of new crop of litterateurs like Shamsur Rahman, Syed Shamsul Haque, Akhteruzzamn Ilyas, Al-Mamun, Shawkat Osman and the likes came out. And the political upheavals led to creation of Bangladesh" (Khan, 2018). In addition to it, 21st February is a national mourning Day of Bangladesh.

One author whose work is highly relevant in this context is Syed Jamil Ahmed. Ahmed is an academic and performance practitioner based in Bangladesh. Most of his work focuses on the indigenous theatre and identity in the South Asian political society. However, the aspect of his work that is most significant to this study is the insights he makes into the wide-ranging apparatuses of identity and politics. Ahmed examines,

Theatre in Bangladesh became deeply entangled with cultural nationalism on the evening of 21 February 1953, when the political prisoners of a cell in Dhaka Central Jail performed Munier Chowdhury's *Kabar (The Grave)* – literally by the light of lanterns, lamps and matchsticks. An early example of 'prison theatre' undertaken entirely by the prisoners and for the prisoners, the performance of the play was held clandestinely to commemorate the crisis of 21 February 1952. On that day, thousands of students in Dhaka city had marched the streets to demand the institution of Bengali as a state language of Pakistan. Their clash with the police erupted into a conflagration in which at least nine people were killed, and the entire city of Dhaka was paralysed. [...] the performance of The Grave in 1953 inaugurates that

moment of modern theatre in the landmass today known as Bangladesh when the Bengali nation began to be narrated anew against Islamic signs mobilized by the postcolonial nation state of Pakistan (2016, p. 274).

In a workshop, BAG expresses the aim to follow up their own creative performance and participant's feedback every year. Also, they focus to set idea in a way that will appeal to the Glasgow based stakeholders to come aboard in this effort and become a long-term partner. The way to do this is to bring the essence of *Bhasha Shaheed Dibash* but set in the global context. And that is why holding the celebration close to the 21st February is important. This blends in with the 'Aye Write!' book festival in Glasgow that held in March every year, BAG proposes to create an international festival, which will celebrate all the different languages of the world where the conduit will be made to expose the literary talents of Bangladesh by translating and publishing their work for global readers. Khan added, "Can you imagine if plays by Selim al-Deen or Abdullah Al Mamun being performed in English to the world? Literary works of Shawkat Ali or Political Satire of Fayeze Ahmed being translated and people learning about Bangladesh from a completely new light!" This will be associated with other languages spoken in Glasgow. BAG believes that "... any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (Thiong'O, 2004, p. 13), and hopes each of the languages will be a feature language every year – focussing the literary legacy throughout the year in Glasgow. This festival will connect with these various communities and bring in the communities aboard to come with everyone's 'produce' - in any form of literary/cultural output. "That's not going to happen overnight but BAG can cast the first stone ... turn it into really a 'celebration' of diversity. A cerebral union of humanity in diversity" (Khan 2018).

National Theatre of Scotland was contacted by BAG with an aim to re-imagine the play *Kabar* in a way where the organisation could involve as many Bangladeshi community members as possible to bridge the political history of 1952s Bengali cultural nationalism and to address the potential diaspora of creative people living in Glasgow. A key aim of the re-imagine *Kabar* is to reinforce the universal message of a heterogeneous society where the politically marginalised (indigenous/*Adibashi*) people from every corner of the globe, as well as from Bangladesh, who are not 'mainstream', who have the democratic rights to be recognized with equal dignity, will be depicted. Besides, freedom of speech is one of the basic notions of democracy. The emancipation of soul depends upon it. The discussions form an objective: "Can we imagine a world independent of current paradigm but a multi-axial ethnic and language-based cultural society and diversity?" (Khan, 2018)

As preparation, a daylong participatory workshop titled 'Navigate a diverse cultural identity through celebrating the International Mother Language Day' (later turned into *Bhasha: The Glasgow Language Festival*) took place on 28 April 2018 in a private house in Glasgow. Encompassing the suggestions that brewed from the workshop, BAG anticipates to illustrate several activities that engage Glasgow-based diverse communities in the performances including a Bangladeshi short film presentation, talk with a Bangladeshi award winning writer, talk on the 'Mother tongue and other tongue' by SCILT, video presentation of a Dhaka-based theatre production named *A Different Romeo Juliet* performed by Bangladeshi physically challenged artist that jointly produced by Dhaka Theatre and British Council, a workshop on sign language by Jenny Sealy, A Chinese language taster and music session by Confucius Society, Gaelic language presentation by British Council Scotland, UNESCO presentation, a lecture demonstration by Tahmina Akhter Mili on 'How diaspora is teaching language to the second generation', children's performance-corner of fine arts and poetry, invitation to the diverse community members to contribute by writing 'A letter to my child'

in mother language, and perform *Kabar: otoppor* (*Kabar: after*) – a re-imagination of the original by Munier Chowdhury (see Appendix B). Also, intend to connect the reader, writer and viewer from diverse background in cooperation with the social media, Glasgow schools and public libraries; the tasks will culminate as a feature in BAG's yearly publication titled *Jora Shanko*.

Conclusion

Norwegian social anthropologist F. Berth sees a society combining ethnic differences is a plural society. The economic interdependence of those groups and their ecological specialization are in the centre of this society. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways that is different sections of the society living side by side, within the same political unit (Berth, 1986). Plural society enhances diversity of views rather than a single approach. In light of this Holdsworth's review can be appropriate that she borrowed from Bhaba (1990), "the ambivalent nature of the nation that is subject to competing discourses, change and periods of progress, regression and stasis" and thus "... the reality of the nation is reliant on its impurity, its ability to accommodate the mixing and blurring of cultures that make up the contemporary nation through migration, exile, transnationalism and globalisation, which leads to the presence of hybridised identities characterised by splitting, doubling and mixing" (Holdsworth, 2010, p. 22).

The aim of the UK diaspora community activities in the performing arts aligns with a Glasgow based community activist Sarwar Hassan's remark, "We believe that this is the way a baton will be handed over to the next generation and the seeds of dream we plant today will grow in near future toward a tolerant and mutual respectful plural society where people peacefully live with their physical and cultural similarities and differences" (Hassan, 2018).

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Appendix

Appendix A: Following summary is taken from the Purbanat CIC publication: "Altab Ali was a Bangladeshi textile worker who was murdered by three teenagers on 4 May 1978 in a racist attack in East London as he walked home after work. It provoked the mass mobilisation of the Bengali community locally. For the first time, the Bengali community in East London came out onto the streets to make their voice heard and claim their identity. They wanted rights and justice. The Police detained a few of the community members. The community demonstrated a non-violent sit-in protest in front of the police station and was asking for their release. Finally, the detainees were released, which became a jubilant moment for the Bengali community as they were finally being heard and their identity was being recognised. The play defined '78 as a significant moment, and inspires all other minority groups to be confident with their identity and to stand up for their rights, thus combatting racism in whatever form or whenever it comes" (Purbanat, 2018).

Appendix B: Followed by Muneir Chowdhury's *Kabar*, Tareque Abdullah wrote *Kabar: After*. Tareque states in a note, "In *Kabar* a politician and a police inspector want to bury the dead bodies who died during the movement for language, but the bodies refused to be buried. Chowdhury was tortured and killed in 1971. In *Kabar: After*. I imagined, Munier Chowdhury is talking to the characters created by him. At the end he refused to be buried too. I used rhymes and poems in conversations to illustrate the historical facts in abstract" (2018).