Chapter 4
Attributes of Social Identity of Bengali Migrants in NCT of Delhi

Today we are living in an era which reveals a seemingly paradoxical combination of trends towards cultural unification and globalization. It is a time of the large scale movement of people across the globe and the increasing social activity of the ethnic groups (Spencer, 2006). According to United Nations, the world is witnessing a rapid increase in migration. The number of people living outside their countries of origin has considerable increased from 85 million in 1975 to 244 million in 2015 (World Migration Report, 2015). This ongoing global migration has thus, become a major issue since it brings noticeable changes in the receiving countries in respect of their demographic, political and cultural factors.

Though different ethnic migrant groups are migrating within international boundaries or within national boundaries yet a major concern of these migrant communities is the preservation of their ethnic cultures. These ethnic groups are always very sensitive about their cultural objects like traditions, rituals, language etc. because it is these cultural objects which reinforce their lifestyle, ensure a sense of stability towards their social structure and guarantee the survival of the whole community (Spencer, 2006). In other words, these ethnic groups themselves can be regarded as cultural objects which provide meaning to themselves as well as to the other communities (Billington, 1991). Whenever and wherever any ethnic group migrates, not only does it bring demographic changes both to the places of origin and destination but also bring significant changes in its own social identity and culture. The social identity may be broadly defined as a sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings which are transmitted from one generation to another. Even though there are various attributes that are needed to bind and preserve the social identity of any migrated community yet the most observable aspects are language, religion, food, tradition, clothing etc. which together form an important part of a person’s cultural heritage.

In the present chapter language, religion, food, dress, festivals will be considered as attributes contributing to the formation of social identity of Bengalis in the host society (Figure 4.1). The chapter is based entirely on the information collected through 1200 questionnaires from 1200 families surveyed through the process of snowball technique.
These questionnaires covered the following attributes of the Bengali cultural group i.e. personal information, duration of stay in Delhi, language, religion, dress, food and eating habits, festivals and their celebrations, friendship patterns, membership of any Bengali association, marriage networks, religious networks and personal opinions. The process of identifying and selecting Bengali migrant community in Delhi with its own subculture was quite easy as one who is familiar with the city of Delhi would know that a large number of Bengali migrants are settled in a locality named Chittaranjan Park (C.R. Park) (Map 4.1).

Gans (1962) reported in the study of the Italian Americans that his visit to West End “with its Italian and Jewish restaurants and food stores and the variety of people who crowded in the streets” left him with the impression that he was in Europe. Similarly one who is familiar with Bengal, on his visit to C. R. Park would certainly feel that he/she is in Bengal. He would come across a number of Bengali restaurants and shops, temples and schools; and cultural and social Bengali associations in this locality where one would notice a large number of old Bengalis clad in ‘dhotis’ (traditional Bengali wear) on the streets and meeting at the ‘Addas’ (an informal conversation among friends and relatives, preferably accompanied with a cup of tea/ coffee and smoke of cigarettes) (Figure 4.2) (Map 4.1).

Figure: 4.1
Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Attributes of Social Identity

Source: Prepared by the Researcher
Figure: 4.2
The Bengali Ethos: Distinguishing Features

The Bengali Demeanor

Arrives with ‘Shubho Mahalaya’ and ends with a Bengali phrase ‘Aar Bhalo Lagche Naa’

Traditional Dress, Pandal Hopping, Dhanuchi Dance, Sada Kashful, Sindoor Khela, Authentic Bengali Cuisine

Movies & Literature

Satyajit Ray & Rabindranath Tagore can fix any mood

THE BENGALI DEMEANOR

Durga Pujo

Durgo Pujo

Food

Puchka, Jhal Muri, Luchi Aloo, Singhara

Rosogolla, Mishti Doi, Chom Chom, Sondesh, Payesh

Culture

Music & ‘Addas’ are life

‘Associations’ are Backbone

Misc.

Believing ‘Boroline’ can cure almost everything

Typical Vocabulary:
Safety Pin as ‘Septipin’
Bottle as ‘Botol’
Chai as ‘Cha’
Chittaranjan Park
SOCIO-CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
2016

Index
- Residential Areas
- Worship Places
- Shopping Centers
- Institutions
- Open Spaces
- Social Amenities
- Parks
- Roads

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Delhi, Field Work, 2015-16
Thereby, for understanding the Bengali community and its social identity in terms of language, dress, festivals, rituals, food, religion etc. in the following pages, a brief discussion of these attributes is attempted, as revealed by the 1200 surveys collected in June-March, 2015-16.

1. Language

“Our language is like a pearl inside a shell. The shell is like the people that carry the language. If our language is taken away, then that would be like a pearl that is gone. We would be like an empty oyster shell” (Dhurrkay, 2012)

To a layman, language is a medium of communication and with its increased usage the world has shrunk. Be it an international migration or national migration, people are moving out of their ancestral birth place to the new homelands carrying their own distinct identity. Thaplawala (2009) stated that the loss of migrants own language undermines both, their social structure as well as disappearance of their group’s culture. Therefore, language is considered as the most significant corner stone for any culture as it cements a unique identity of any migrant group and helps them to express their particular needs and concerns in the society. The United Nations (2012) also highlighted the role of language and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of the indigenous people. They suggested that language is the fundamental marker of indigenous peoples’ distinctiveness and cohesiveness hence, it forms an essential part of peoples’ ways of life, culture and identities. Furthermore, in the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, it was affirmed that the loss of language is the loss of the ability to describe the landscape and migrants’ place in it, thus, it was stated that language plays a fundamental element in binding communities together as a culture and individuals to each other in a society (The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, 2011). Moreover, language also helps the migrants to maintain their identity and culture; it helps them to work out where they fit in society and who they are related to (The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, 2011).

Since language is not spoken by a single or an individual person rather been spoken from generation to generation by families, for this reason, it has been defined as a community i.e. a group of people. Turner (2012) mentioned that in order to know, to relate and to understand one self, the prime step is to learn one’s own language first than any other language because it not only recognizes ‘who’ we are but also ‘what’ we are.
Furthermore, Box (2012) explained the significance of language in migrants life in a more intrinsic way and highlighted the five essential elements i.e. language, land, law, kinship and ceremony that are needed for maintaining the social identity of the migrant in the host society. These elements, he specified, are so intrinsically related to each another that drawing out even one of the element would break the law which further could affect the identity of the whole community. For any migrant group not only language plays an important role in retaining the identity and spirit among their community; their connection to the native land but also gives a sense of belongingness to them. Thus, language is considered to be the only powerful tool to fill the generation gap between the migrants (The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, 2011).

The Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) has also specified that the significance of language not only can be limited in strengthening the social identity and culture of any migrant community but it also helps in building a strong interconnection between family, country and kinship of the migrants (Figure 4.3).

![Figure: 4.3](image)

Interpretation of the Inter-connectedness of Language

Source: Adapted from Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA), Submission 68a

Therefore, going through the above literature it can be scrutinized that for the settlement of any migrant community in the city of destination, language has often provided an initial basis for social cohesion. It is a wish to preserve an identity which is highest in the cultural aspect of any human being as it has an emotional connection that makes one want to die with what one was born with.
Figure: 4.4

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Transformation of Language

Source: Prepared by the Researcher
Delhi, being a ‘melting pot’ city, encompasses a large number of population of diverse cultural background, from different parts of the country such as Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana etc. This makes Delhi a blended hub of varieties of culture and hence provides language a vital role to play in distinguishing these linguistic and cultural groups from each other within the host society. What is evident from Bengali migrants in Delhi is their desire to withhold their cultural identity, individuality per se. For this particular reason of preservation, Bengalis have adopted various measures; like they use their own native language as a medium of communication amongst themselves; since they believe that their language plays a major role in enhancing their rich cultural heritage (Table 4.1) (Figure 4.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Spoken Comfortably</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Thus, to keep this spark of distinctive cultural identity alive the old school (older generation) would talk to the new school (younger generation) in Bangla i.e. the Bengali language. Almost 80 percent of the Bengalis prefer communicating with their children in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Spoken at Home</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocktail Bengali</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Bengali language; so as to let them learn their language this way, since the neighborhood, friends or schools are not always Bengali speaking (Table 4.2).
However, while interacting socially, politically or professionally with different linguistic groups Bengali migrants make use of different languages, prominent among them is English followed by Hindi. Though, Bengalis don’t find it obligatory to switch over to a non-Bengali language to survive in a city which is known for its Punjabi inhabitants, yet they do agree with the fact that knowing the local language is very important, especially to make effective interactions with the local population. They also asserted that whether in a public or a private place wherever they meet a Bengali they communicate in their own language, as it brings the feeling of belongingness with each other. It is this belongingness that brings a kind of an atmosphere that appears known and similar. Nonetheless, it is highly commendable that the Bengali migrants have not got influenced or burdened by the diverse population of Delhi and are still holding and retaining their identity through the expression of language.

Bengalis give utmost importance to the sustainability of their language. To preserve their Bengalihood, they follow various ways for its sustenance. These may include: (i) learning Bengali language through satellite sources (ii) using literary material like newspapers, magazines, books, novels etc for enhancing knowledge of Bengali literature and (iii) participating in various Bengali events, activities and festivals (Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite Sources</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Mobile Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Material</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Magazines</th>
<th>Books and Novels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in various Activities/Festivals</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Social Gatherings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Means of Communication and Interaction

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Not only Bengali people, but also their institutions like libraries, academic bodies, associations etc. in and around C.R. Park are playing significant role in the direction of
Map 4.2

Chittaranjan Park
LOCATION OF LIBRARIES
2016

Index

- Libraries

1 - Chittaranjan Park Kali Mandir Society
2 - Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Memorial Society
3 - C.R. Park Bangiya Samaj Library

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Delhi, Field Work, 2015-16
preserving their social identity. Hundreds of Bengali books including complete works of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and modern authors like Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, are available in the three popular libraries in Chittaranjan Park for consultation by the local people (Map 4.2). As can be inferred from the map, all the three libraries are located inside the Bengali associations. The first library i.e. Chittaranjan Park Kali Mandir Society is found within the premises of Kali Mandir in Chittaranjan Park. Similarly, the other two libraries i.e. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Memorial Society and C.R. Park Bangiya Samaj Library are also found within the Bengali associations i.e. Deshbandhu Citranjan Memorial and C.R. Park Bangiya Samaj. These libraries are as old as Bengali associations which are deeply rooted to Bengali history and culture.

Inside the complex of Kali Mandir, there is an old library where people can be seen reading Bengali dailies and weekly magazines. Another important library is being run by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Memorial Society and it has a count of many rare books, which are more than 100 years old. While some of these books have been donated by library visitors and community members, the others have been brought from Kolkata. Still another popular library among Bengalis is in the complex of Chittaranjan Park Bangiya Samaj. Being termed as “Mini Kolkata” here, all the Bengali newspapers such as Anandbazaar, Aajkaal, Bartaman Patrika and Ganashakti that are published in West Bengal are being made available to the residents of C.R. Park by every evening from the first flight (Plate 2). The availability of such well-maintained libraries thus provides an important joint where Bengali folks can gather, read Bengali literature and subsequently strengthen their cultural roots.

In addition to libraries, for sustaining their language, Bengalis have also established various associations such as C.R. Park Bangiya Samaj, Karol Bagh Bangiya Samsad, Bengali Club, Dwarka Bangiya Samaj etc (Map 4.3). As the map reveals, there are nine Bengali associations located within the premises of Chittaranjan Park. Although majority of these associations are occupying the central place i.e. the hub of Chittaranjan Park where apart from residential area, other things such as shopping centres, cultural centres and social hubs are also located. The location of Bengali associations covering the central position in C.R. Park indicates that the history of Bengalis in Delhi is as old as the Chittaranjan Park itself. Apart from this, there are three other Bengali associations i.e. Rabindra Natyam Research Centre, Rabigeetika and Sidhi Vinayak Kala Kendra which are located on the south east corner of Chittaranjan Park. These are the new associations
Map 4.3

Chittaranjan Park
LOCATION OF BENGALI CLUBS/SOCIETIES/ASSOCIATIONS
2016

Index

- Bengali Clubs/Associations

1 - Bengali Chandra Pali Memorial
2 - East Pakistan Displaced Person Association
3 - Purbosree Mahila Samiti
4 - Rabindra Natyam Research Center
5 - C.R. Park Bangiya Samaj
6 - Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Memorial
7 - Aparajita Mahila Samiti
8 - Rabigetika
9 - Sidhi Vinayak Kala Kendra

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Delhi, Field Work, 2015-16
formed by the residents of Chittaranjan Park. The location of these associations towards the periphery indicates that due to a lack of space available in the core, the Bengalis are opening their associations in the residential spaces. These associations organize Bengali plays, movies, puja ceremonies and other cultural programs in Bengali vernacular and work in the direction of representing Bengali culture. Tapan Sengupta (72 years), member of Bengali association clearly said:

“*Our Bengali associations and clubs works as a communication centre for us. It is like keeping the memories of the motherland alive by speaking and conversing in our own language, sharing our views on common ideas. It provides us with a Bengali atmosphere where we can unburden our minds*.”

Such functions arrange not only a rigorous participation of the older and younger Bengali generations alike but, also help them in keeping their culture alive and Bengalis closely tied with it.

While keeping adherence to their mother-tongue (Bangla), the Bengalis have also observed changes in the expression of their language over time, particularly with each coming and passing generation. Though the older generation prefers their children to speak, read and write original native Bengali language with competence yet the fusion or assimilation of their original language is clearly visible among the new generation contacting the host society. Such ways work not only for the survival of their language

---

Figure: 4.5

**Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Languages Spoken by Younger Generation**

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16
but also for adopting the new environment and getting assimilated in it. While interacting with the non-Bengali-speaking host society, on a regular basis for work, study, shopping, celebrations etc. the younger Bengali population has evolved its own means of acceptance and interaction and mixed their language with English and Hindi and termed this ‘mix of Bengali-Hindi-English’ as “Cocktail Bengali” (Figure 4.5).

As Sudipto Chakarborty, 55 years old resident of Chittaranjan Park said:

“As much as I would love to, but my daughter will not speak pure Bangla, though she will surely follow that. Her pure Bangla speech will survive or not I doubt. She growing up in Delhi end up speaking neither Bangla nor English or Hindi, as she will speak Cocktail Bengali (a mixture of all). I don’t mind that but I hope she will remember her roots”

The Bengali community which initially did not understand any language, except Bengali and English, has now, transformed itself with each younger generation into competent Hindi speaking community. This community is, thus, no longer a community speaking only Bengali. The present survey reveals that 18 per cent of the respondents could speak, read and write their native language with fluency (Fig 4.6). However, owing to the significant contribution of libraries, associations and family heads as much as 60 per cent members of the Bengali families which were surveyed could at least speak and understand Bengali language (Fig 4.6 & 4.7). This way, through their native language the younger Bengali generations are connected to their roots and the elder generations are making all efforts to keep the bond alive and strengthened with the passage of time.

Figure: 4.6

![Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Familiarity with Bengali Language among Younger Generation](image_url)

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16
Map 4.4

Chittaranjan Park
LOCATION OF “ADDA”
2016

Index

• Adda
(Informal gathering of Bengali Intelligentsia)

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Delhi, Field Work, 2015-16
To preserve their language, Bengalis have also maintained ‘Addas’, in addition to libraries, newspaper circulation and associations. Adda is an informal gathering in a locality to enjoy ‘get-togethers’ and having discussions. Such a habit is one of the best known traditional Bengali styles of remaining connected with their cultural roots. Since, Bengalis are known for their radical upbringing and historical belongingness to their culture; Adda emerged as a local terminology to signify their love for sharing views and discussing ideas. Significantly, this habit of meeting over tea or coffee accompanied with smoke clad environment is still prevalent among this migrant-group. The present day ‘Addas’ of the current Bengali population at Chittaranjan Park in Delhi are shown in Map 4.4. The location of ‘Addas’ in the map is mainly confined around the places such as temples, durga puja grounds, shopping centres, Bengali Associations etc. where all the social and cultural activities of Bengalis take place. It is interesting to note that the newly formed Bengali associations are located more towards the peripheral areas and the location of ‘Addas’ on the other hand, is confined more towards the central hub of Chittaranjan Park. Interaction among Bengalis through their associations and Addas thus shows how vocal their habits are and how effectively they are using their traditional manners to preserve their cultural togetherness.

The significance of language for the Bengalis residing in the National Capital Territory of Delhi is thus emphasized by the fact that language is, no doubt, the foremost basis of their identity in the host society; but at the same time, the mixing of Bangla with other languages is also assuming importance in the process of integration and assimilation of Bengalis with the host society. Though, a mixed-language, instead of pure Bangla, has
Figure: 4.8

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Changing Food Varieties

Source: Prepared by the Researcher
emerged yet interesting efforts are being taken by the community to preserve their language and its distinct identity.

2. Food

“Food operates as one of the key cultural signs that structure people’s identity and their concept of others” (Wenying Xu, 2008)

Food does not only define ‘who’ we are but it vitally exhibits where we come from. It holds our identity and has the power to reflect it on us too well. India is a unique country and due to its uniqueness, each one of its states has a special dietary pattern that distinguishes it from others. To withhold this uniqueness, the migrant population tries to maintain it through certain individualistic means and food certainly makes an important one because if something becomes a part of culture and has been practiced since birth, it never dies. Bhat and Sahoo (2003) while studying on the Indo-Canadian migrants stated that in order to adjust in a ‘foreign’ environment, the migrant communities always come together to maintain their cultural identity and to promote their common interest. This they achieve by sustaining their social attributes of identity such as food, language, dress, religious beliefs and by various art forms. While Hadjiyanni and Helle (2008) highlighted that in this era of globalization where cultures and traditions are blending together into a hybrid form crossing borders and national boundaries, food has attained the prominence and status of a cultural expression that conveys the similarities amongst us. Bell and Valentine (2013) on the similar context further provided a detailed comparison of food with national identity and displayed the importance of food. They explained that since the history of any nation’s diet always speaks the history of the nation itself, therefore, food is always regarded as an integral part of any migrant’s life.

Veblen (1902) in his work ‘Conspicuous Consumption’ further painted the picture highlighting the importance of food in deeper context and elucidated that food alone connotes class and privilege. According to Appadurai (1991) the importance of food can be illustrated by its use in communicating with different types of class through its consumption. He added that, food has not only the power to uphold relations signaling rank, distance and segmentation rather it can also mark and create relations of equality, intimacy and solidarity. However, Hutson (2008) linked food with the physical and emotional well-being of the migrants as under the conditions of displacement, food not only acts as a stabilizing cultural element among the migrant group but it is also positioned as one of the easily transplanted and preserved element across geographical divides (Lockwood & Lockwood, 2000).
Moreover, Rozin (1996) discussed the importance of food among migrants in retaining their identity in respect to the sharing of food. He stated that food sharing is a major expression of solidarity as well as indicative of close relationships among migrants. The sharing of food during traditional meals such as during celebrations and holidays is of significant value (Cherry, Ellis, et. al 2010). Furthermore, they explained that while sharing food migrants can be observed to enact in culturally specific manner which is particularly based upon the values and beliefs of the group they belong to. Thus, food practices played by these migrant groups play a crucial role in addressing their fundamental social motives such as, identifying and creating a bond among group members; signaling within group status, and preserving in group/out group boundaries.

Also, stories of families, migrations, assimilations, resistance have long been told in respect to food choices along with the changes it has brought over time in personal as well as in group identities. Food choices of various cultural groups are thus, many a times, connected to ethnic behavior and religious beliefs. Therefore, a study of food habits helps in understanding the development and transmission of cultures. It is constantly explained that belief, value and attitude that are practiced and accepted by the members of the migrant groups and community are not inherited but learnt. Dietz (2011) further elucidated that migrants’ ethnic identities can be maintained through dietary choices. He stated that ethnicity can be strengthened through the food that is eaten on day to day basis, reflexively reinforcing a sense of identity amidst another culture. Food does not only save life but conserves cultural identities as well. Apart than what should be eaten, food has a symbolic aspect to serve by distinguishing a mark between individual and collective identity process.

Moreover sociologist named Elias (1978) has explained the symbolic significance of food in respect to determining social power and status relationships whereby imbued with symbolic meaning, food is often used in the construction of identity as a means of resistance to colonial and assimilation pressures (Lee, 2000). Therefore, food, geography/place and identity are intertwined with each other from a symbolic perspective. However, these symbolic meanings are subject to change with different cultural, ethnic and class considerations (Mintz, 1996). However, Hayward (1977) while studying on immigrants in United States described that people migrate to improve their economic, social and educational opportunities. During the course of migration, the immigrants have to leave behind certain element which mark their social identity and had to
reconstruct and reestablish new sets of identity. Besides, residing outside their own country and reconstructing new identities the immigrants still remain intact to their social, economic and cultural ties (Clifford, 1994). They follow certain instrumental measures to retain connections to their cultural expressions such as family and friends get together; practicing same religious ceremonies and traditions; cooking their traditional food with same taste and aroma and thus, they often feel ‘bounded’ with their own culture.

Kittler, Sucher & Nelms (2012) also addressed that food habits have high degree of influence on migrants’ life and identity. They stated that one's cultural identity can be easily reaffirmed through their daily eating habits. In fact, who we are and who we become is a part of the food influence on our overall identity because it ties us to our family roots. The food we seek at the time of stress or frustration which we call as comfort food, usually belong to one’s own culture. Thus, to establish and maintain social bonds, food culture both shapes and is shaped by the culture as a whole to play a significant role in forming a bond within an identity. Humans hold an unbiased divine love for their food and to preserve what is delectable, they work towards the most favorable scenario to not compromise at convenience with their tastes so readily. Food has an influence not only on our health and taste but on our distinctiveness as well. No matter wherever we go, food would follow us and vice versa.

Nevertheless, eating habits too evolve in time and places. Humans keep seeking new tastes because they love change and like to try new options. Moreover ‘change’ is acceptable only when it is convenient and somehow rooted in social - cultural setup. If it is seen historically, people and their food habits are directly linked to their geographical adaptations. Availability of a typical type of food may lead to the liking of that particular food item and subsequently eating that food becomes a habit. Those, settled along rivers started eating fish in abundance and fishing became their occupation. Initially, for Bengali people fish was an essential component of their daily food and later on it became an inseperable part of their culture. In sociology and social psychology, it is rightly said that habits become tradition and tradition becomes culture which further governs the behavior of the society, as a whole. This is the reason why Bengalis eat and love fish so much (Figure 4.8).

Bengali people settled in Delhi are also considered to be great foodies and they appreciate good taste. Rice with fish forms a part of their staple food and thus there are no limitations to the new and varied types of fishes included in their diet. Fish recipes also form a part of every festive celebration in Bengal. Salmon, Hilsa, Bhekti, Magur, Carp,
Figure 4.9

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Consumption of Fish

Respondents (in per cent)

Fish Consumption

Daily
Once a Week
Occasionally
Rarely

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Figure 4.10

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Type of Fish Consumed

Percentage

Hilsa (salt water fish)
Shutki (dried fish)

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Figure 4.11

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Major Fish Buying Areas

Respondents (in per cent)

Major Areas

C R Park
Gole Market
Indian National Army Market
Mahavir Enclave

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16
Rui and Prawns are some common varieties of fish cooked by them. Hilsa (salt water fish) in comparison to shutki (a dried fish) is the most commonly cooked fish in a Bengali household. Bengali preferred fish Hilsa is so readily available in C.R. Park that they have no need to opt for shutki (a preserved form of fish) which is certainly less preferred. Fish is an important part of Bengalis’ daily diet in Chittaranjan Park as is evident from the data collected by the researcher. With an easy availability of fish, 64 percent of Bengalis are able to maintain it as a part of their daily diet.

Moreover, out of the total consumption of fish by Bengalis, 85 percent is brought from Chittaranjan Park itself (Figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11) (Plate 3). Not only fish everything that matches Bengalis’ palette of flavours and forms a part of their traditional food habit is available in their locality i.e. C.R. Park. In brief, it may be put that every single spice with which a Bengali cuisine, specifically, a fish, is cooked, is as commonly present in C.R. Park as in Calcutta. The typical Bengali food has a distinct kind of taste, due to the use of mustard oil and panch-foran (mix of five special types of species) (Plate 4). The perfect blend of sweet and spicy flavors in dishes is considered the forte of Bengali cuisine, at which they have to make no compromise, just by being a resident of Delhi. Suparna Das (65 years old) resident of Chittaranjan Park proudly stated:

“C.R. Park is the centre of Bengali culture; everything related to Bengali culture is available here, from music, folk songs, Durga Puja to Panchphoron (five mixed spices), Posto (poppy seeds), Shona moog daal (gold colored moong daal), misti doi (sweet curd) and not to mention delicious river fish. Then what is the harm in calling it our cultural homeland? Off course It is!”

Today, C.R. Park houses the maximum number of Bengalis in Delhi, that is why, the food that is found here is exactly what one would expect to get in Calcutta which is popularly known as ‘the City of Joy’. Be it a mustard mixed Hilsa fish, or mishti doi (sweetened curd), or jhal muri, Chittaranjan Park has everything that serves as the basis as to why C.R Park is famous in Delhi as a ‘go-to’ place for a taste of Bengal.

Not only this, the four markets in Chittaranjan Park, catering to the daily needs of Bengali community such as fish, Bengali spices, snacks and Bengali sweets are the spatial expressions of their social identity as reflected in their food habits (Map 4.5).
Map 4.5

Chittaranjan Park
LOCATION OF MARKETS
2016

Index
- Market
1 - Market No. 1
2 - Market No. 2
3 - Market No. 3
4 - Market No. 4

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Delhi, Field Work, 2015-16
The oldest established market in Chittaranjan Park i.e. Market Number 1 came up in the late third quarter of the 20th century. It still holds the tag for being the most famous fish selling market in the locality. It was in the mid-70s that fish sellers came from West Bengal to Chittaranjan Park and had established their shops in Market Number 1. In this market one can locate most of the traditional Bengali snacks such as *puchka* (gol gappas), *jhal muri* (bhel puri), *singhara* (samosa) and other classic Bengali evening snacks. Bengalis’ next palpable desire are the cutlets namely, *fish fingers, egg devil, mocha chop* (banana flower cutlet) and *posto narekel bora* (fritters made of poppy seeds and coconut). These names hold a sentimental relevance in the hearts of Bengalis because they are unique and are difficult to find outside Kolkata but Chittaranjan Park offers everything to its residents to cherish their Bengalihood.

Contrary to Market 1 of Chittaranjan Park, Market 2 offers a delightful main course menu of the Bengali meal in a traditional Bengali restaurant known as ‘*Maa Tara’*. This restaurant serves most of the traditional Bengali cuisine such as *Kosha Mangsho*, a spicy Bengali styled mutton, *Doi katla* a fish prepared in curd which is tangy soft and moist from inside and *Bhetki shorsha*, which is another unique dish where the fish is first boiled in milk, then spiced and greased to have a creamy, runny flavor in each bite, with a pungent taste of mustard oil.

Moreover, the most famous Bengali snack called *Puchka*, becomes more popular with an idiom which says, “*Dilli ki chaat aur Calcutta ka puchka*” should not be missed. This

![Figure: 4.12](image)

**Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Food Preferences Among Younger and Older Generations**

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16
Plate 2
The Oldest Shop selling Bengali Daily Mail (Newspapers and Magazines)

Plate 3
Market No.1 - Famous for Fresh Fish

Plate 4
Popular Bengali Spices readily available in C.R Park
way it is clearly evident how the change is important and it is not only the ‘new who should adopt’ but even vice versa i.e. the host society has also welcomed and provided these migrant groups with enough space to evolve and create favorable conditions to serve a large variety of food items and to adjust.

With every effort at preservation, a great degree of influence of Delhi’s culture on Bengali community is clearly visible especially among the younger generation. Having a Kolkata styled biryani at one corner; one can easily find a Chinese or Italian corner in the adjacent lane. However, sign boards of “luchi aloo” (aloo curry and poori) and local Bengali magazines from Kolkata are quick reminders of the fact that this is a ‘Bong Land’. The older Bengali population is still confined to the old food items while the younger generation, in an era of cafes, does enjoy pastas, cakes and momos at different eating places (Figure 4.12).

The above description does not speak of any radical change until now in Bengalis’ dietary pattern in Delhi. They have somehow, evolved their degree of preferences about it. However, what is new is called an addition and what is old is a tradition. The survey clearly shows that though the food culture of the host society has influenced the younger generation to a large extent, yet these youngsters also have Bengali ridden flavors to let go of them. The change thus, seems mutual.

Therefore, regardless of whether Bengalis are newcomers or have been in Delhi for generations and regardless of how much they have adopted the local food; the smell, the taste and the traditional methods of cooking Bengali food they inherited through generations continue to nourish both their bodies and souls. Serving as cultural anchors for their Bengali identity against the host culture, food ways have become mainstay in easing Bengalis’ process of adaptations and adjustments. As they say, “You can leave Bengal but Bengal always stays with you.”

3. Clothing

“The history of clothing is less anecdotal than it would appear. It touches on every issue like cultural stability, fashion as well as social identity” (Fernand, 1981)

The sense of clothing and adornment is indicative of both the personal and the public ways in which identities are created and expressed.
Figure: 4.13

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Changing Dressing Patterns

Source: Prepared by the Researcher
It protects modesty and its cultural significance goes much beyond the basic necessity. Dressing is a daily experience which forms a communication that transcends cultures, time and geographies. It also helps in creating a boundary between an individual and wider mass of people that require knowledge, technique and aesthetics (Davis, 1985).

According to Turner (2012) since clothing is a portrayal of identity; there are at least three levels that it conveys to an observer such as historical, cultural and personal. For example, dresses from the history have a set pattern of designs which suggests that meanings of dresses can change when put against time and space. Culturally, dress is a code that is often mutually and intelligibly used within a cultural group to strengthen their identity, especially at a place which does not belong to its homeland. For instance, depending upon the pre knowledge of it, colonial era has a fixed imagination, if and when talked about in respect to clothing with the white women dressed in gowns, hats, silks and gloves while the men in black coats, white shirts and hats on them.

Clothing is an important aspect in retaining the social identity of the migrants because it not only expresses migrants’ individuality but also reflects their culture, personality and preferences to the people of host society who are unfamiliar to them. Dress is also considered as a connecting link by which migrants identify their ethnic group, nationalities and culture since every ethnic group has its own traditional dresses denoting its distinct culture (Edensor, 2002). Not only this, ethnic dresses are a marker of cultural distinctiveness and help the migrants to express their identity in national ceremonies as well as in the cultural activities (Wilson, 2004). However, individual personalities are highly influenced by choices while choices are often influenced by fashion. Today clothing is more a part of experimentation and does not travel through eras. Therefore, personal clothing is primarily based upon place, mood and trends.

Clothes have long been referred to as the “social skin”, by anthropologists because irrespective of past or present; clothing has always held a meaning not only to an individual’s persona but also to its representation within the society. Davis (1985) stated that clothing is symbolic in conveying an individual’s social identity, since how a person appears in front of a society is how the society would want to understand it. Angerosa (2014) further supported the influential role played by clothing in communicating identities by drawing link to an old saying “a picture is worth a thousand words”. She explained that when there can be no conversation between the people, they often create impressions based on what they see; such as the person’s clothing and the kind of vocabulary it is bringing across. Whereas, according to Nieslsen and Kernaleguen (1976)
clothing has the power to provide information about person’s age, sex, personality, socio-economic status, values and political ideologies and therein works as a data provider for perceptions (Satrapa et.al., 1992). In fact, Howlett, Pine & Fletcher (2013) highlighted the importance of clothing in maintaining the social identity by stating that even when you may or may not be trying to communicate it, your clothing still manages to convey a complex array of information about who you are to others around you.

Moreover, Kwon (1987) observed that migrant’s choice of clothing is often determined by the kind of person he is and also by the group which they belong to. While Reid, Lancuba & Morrow (1997) suggested that human beings are automatically attracted to people similar to them especially, those who share common history or background with them, which is why a research on immigrants’ clothing is considered significant as well as suggestive of their social identity and meaning. This is mainly related to the theory of social identity in which an individual’s concept about self is derived from its knowledge of particular social group and the significance attached to that group (Tajfel, 1974). For Kwon (1987) importance of clothing cannot be solely attributed to communication it provides about a migrant and its qualities but it also links that migrant to the other members of the society through the use of shared cultural and social patterns.

On the similar note, Feinberg et al. (1992) stated that migrants not only use clothes to define and communicate their social identity to others but they also use clothing as a symbol of their connection to others. Hence, while perceivers’ characteristics and behaviours may affect the way migrants form impressions about others, social grouping is another way to see themselves and they choose to dress. The works of Appadurai (1991) further discussed the concept of global ethnoscape and the changes that are occurring in the 20th century over the mass and rapid movement of people moving from one part of the world to another. Such change in place not only has given new statements to the world’s fashion but also facilitated people to express (through clothing) where they belong in foreign environment; in order to attract those who share same nativity. Eicher et al. (1995) further examined that national dresses worn by the different groups, not only speak of their individual’s past and their cultural heritage but also helps in identifying the citizen of a particular country. These national dresses serve as the dress for one ethnic group within a large variety of other ethnic groups in a particular country. An example of such a country comprising of a vast spectrum of ethnic and religious identities is, India and within the nation, is a cosmopolitan city, the NCT of Delhi that further consists of a large variety of different cultural and ethnic groups.
India, which is a multi-cultural society; clothing is not only different in style and pattern among various ethnic groups but also undergoes tremendous change and experiments combining variety and communicating diverse social identities for them. This section of the chapter addresses the relationship between the dresses worn by the Bengali migrants and their efforts of establishing their separate cultural identities amongst the population of the host society. All through the literature it has been highlighted that the choice of dress of the migrants can be directly linked to the complex layers of history and tradition; custom and their habit; evaluation and response which may significantly be responsible for what they adopt and display. As a mechanism of representation, dress not only plays a significant role in differentiating the migrants from other ethnic groups and allows them to socially integrate within the same group, but also provides them with a powerful force and identity politics.

Since Bengalis have been migrating to Delhi from over a century thereby, they share and posses a strong cultural bond with Delhi. They have experienced changes not only in their language and food habits as mentioned above but also in their dressing patterns as discussed below. By studying these changes in Bengali migrants’ dressing pattern, it is observed that out of the total 1200 Bengalis surveyed, 684 of them (57 per cent) consented upon the complete changes that their wardrobe has undergone and among them 527 respondents i.e. approximately 77 per cent of them are not completely satisfied with such a change in the dressing pattern (Figure 4.13) (Figure 4.14 & 4.15).

Moreover, 81 per cent of the respondents stated that changes in the dressing pattern are more conspicuous and more intense in the younger generations as compared with the
older one. In older generation more changes in dressing style have been witnessed among males than among the females. The reason for such a change among males' dressing style can be understood from their distinguished traditional dressing i.e. dhoti kurta which is generally not worn by masses in the public places in Delhi.

As a result, Bengali men were compelled to change their traditional way of dressing with each younger generation undergoing still more noticeable changes. Nonetheless, children do like wearing traditional dresses but only during the festivals such as Durga Puja, Dussehra etc (Figure 4.16).

It is thus, concluded that what earlier was a daily wear for Bengalis in Delhi is now a part of pure and auspicious ceremonies and pujas. Stagnation in relation to what one considers
Figure: 4.17

Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Religious Functions and Festivals

- Traditional Ceremonies & Rituals
  - Durga Puja
  - Kali Puja
  - Laxmi Puja
  - Saraswati Puja
  - Diwali

- Religious Functions & Festivals

- Traditional Methods of Celebration

- Continuous Interaction with Cosmopolitan Culture of Delhi

- Host Society’s Festivals celebrated by Bengalis
  - Christmas
  - Holi
  - Dusshera
  - Janam Ashtami
  - Karwa Chauth

- Intercultural Marriages

- Birth
- Death
- Marriage

Source: Prepared by the Researcher
as tradition is not possible in a metropolitan city like Delhi. What is important is not to let the tradition die but to keep it alive through various means and expressions. Therefore, these changes in the dressing pattern among the Bengali migrants cannot be looked upon as an end to maintaining their social identity rather should be seen as an act of integration with the host society by preserving their culture as well.


“Religion identifies who you are. You could be born in any country, any time, any place, but religion helps you to get in touch with your insight. It tells you that this is where you come from and this is where you are going” (King, 2003)

India presents a baffling diversity in religious persuasions and faith. Even though religion is a matter of personal faith but religious identity is often expressed at a social plane and has been approached in three ways. Firstly, in the life of an individual or group of individuals, religion always acts as a matter of faith and philosophy. Secondly, following of a certain religion built up a community feeling which further characterizes all religious group formations. Thirdly, this religious faith further leads in marking public expression of a particular religious identity, for instance, by dressing in a particular manner, by holding mass assemblies and public demonstrations on religious occasions etc. (Ahmad, 2006).

Mische (2007) pointed out that religion, not just, helps in providing group labels but also plays a significant role in building social relationships in the society. This further helps in creating a clear boundary between what religion is and what it does by substantive dimension which often overlaps the functional dimension. He further explained that societies with significant religious history form a cultural reservoir which helps in deriving the characterization of the self and others too. Apart from this, religion forms an important dimension of identity and community in five main ways such as it facilitates institutional support for the boundary; highlights different identities and sublines social segregation; offers ritual practices that strengthen community membership; provides religious ideas and lastly, it also helps in providing theological beliefs that sustain and reproduce divisions (Mitchell, 2006). However, both Durkheim (1915) and King (2003) considered religious practices as more important than beliefs. Since, religious meetings and practices both generate group belongingness and also reinforce shared views.
Schreiter (2009) observed that religion is important in the lives of migrants not only at an individual level but also at communal level as it provides both moral and conventional support to the migrants. When post migration migrants grapple with the bewildering experience of loss, separation and disorientation, religion provides them with words to express and experience and construct meanings in their life, while religious community on the other hand offers structures, support and intimacy to the migrants (Smith, 1978). Even though, there are many ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ that are associated with the term “religion”, yet religion deals with wide range of identities that are related to human existence. Also, in a country as diverse as India there is nothing that binds a particular group of people more strongly than religion (Ahmad, 2006).

Looking at much deeper level, ‘festivals’ are often regarded as one such medium that forms a connection between humans and religion through chains of events and practices. However, community festivals which are basically public themed celebrations, often work as a driving force to demonstrate and promote community based values and culture. Moreover, after exploring numerous community festivals, Getz (2002) concluded that events are mainly a celebration of a special character of an urban life in which festivals are linked and intended to strengthen community pride and sense of place while others are related to ethnicity and special interest. According to Falassi (1987), though festivals are common social phenomena that occur in almost all the cultures of the world yet they are expressed in different ways. Therefore, the study of festivals helps in better understanding of the complex and diverse nature of the communities since they range right from the international level to the regional (Gabr, 2004). Dunstan (1994) further observed that it is for the cultural development of the community that festivals provide a common platform to share and manifest purpose, cultural values and traditions. Doing so helps migrants to pursue their local traditions, history and culture. Getz (2002) added that this coming together of migrants helps in promoting ethnic understanding within the communities and also acts as a building block for them.

Moreover, Farber (1983) investigated that through festivals and public celebrations, it becomes easier to learn about a community’s symbolic, economic, political and social life. While Falassi (1987) stated that for the local community the social and symbolic meaning of festivals is often connected to migrants’ values which they see essential to their ideology, history, social identity and physical survival. Derrett (2003) discussed that festivals can enhance both group and place identity if directed in the right manner.
While Adams and Goldberg (1999) stated that it is only through festive celebrations, organizations, communications and management that migrants can positively share cultural values. Davis (2001) further elucidated that festivals can play an important role in challenging the popular perceptions amongst the local people. Whereas, Hall et al. (1992) proposed that festivals, not only, are capable of assisting the development and maintenance of community’s regional identity, they also provide migrants with the opportunity to enhance their cultural values and share their individuality with other communities of the host society. Festivals therefore, help the community to renew their life streams, sanction their institutions and also demonstrate their values to the local people. Festivals minimize the negative impacts of migration, contribute to sustain development, improve relationship between hosts and guests and also provide them with a favourable social, cultural and natural environment.

Delhi being a cosmopolitan city encompasses migrants from all over the country designating itself as a multilingual and multicultural city. Accommodating migrants from different parts of the country, with great vigor and enthusiasm, Delhi celebrates festivals of all religious groups be it Chatt Puja of Bihar, Pongal of South India, Haryali Teej of Haryana or Durga Puja of West Bengal etc. Though, every community that is migrating to Delhi has established its own religious importance yet among all, one such community that is migrating to Delhi from the past more than a century and has created a great impact on Delhi not only demographically but also socially and culturally is the stream of migrants from West Bengal i.e. Bengalis.

The cultural influence of Bengalis in Delhi is so much so that the Durga Puja (major festival of Bengalis) which was initially started in Delhi at a very small scale by a handful of Bengalis as an act of religious practice is now being celebrated at more than 350 places with religious fervor and gaiety (Figure 3.1). Durga Puja, no doubt, is considered as the most significant of all festivals celebrated by Bengalis. There are however, many other festivals such as Bengali New Year, Kali Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Mahalaya, Rabindra Jayanti, Saraswati Puja, Ramakrishna Jayanti, Kojagani Lakshmi Puja, Shivratri etc that are celebrated by them. Though, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Saraswati Puja are the most important Bengali festivals yet the festivals such as Ramakrishna Jayanti, Bengali New Year, Rabindra Jayanti etc. are also celebrated in Bengali socio-cultural associations with fervor and gaiety so as to keep the culture, traditions, customs and the joy of festivities alive among the Bengali migrants’ present generation and the generations to come (Figure 4.17).
NCT of Delhi: Grandeur of Pujo Celebrations

Plate 5
Skilled Artisans
(especially called from Kolkata) for creating the Idol of Durga

Plate 6
Earthen Potware
(Seen as a Symbol of Devi)
Plate 7
Dhak & Kashphool
(Auspicious Symbols of Durga Puja)

Plate 8
Dhunuchi Naach
(Traditional Bengali Dance)

Plate 9
Traditional Bengali Attire during the Festival
Durga Puja which is popularly known as ‘Durgo Pujo’ by Bengalis is a six-day-long festival where Bengalis across the globe unite together despite all diversities in dialect and culture to worship Divine Mother. The festival holds so much importance in Bengalis’ life that artisans are being called all the way from Kolkata for making the idol of Durga, four months prior to Durga Puja (Plate 5 & 6). Besides this, drum beats are also considered as an integral part of Durga Puja. A special variety of drum known as “Dhak” is played by artisans specially called from Kolkata enthralls the hearts of people of Delhi (Plate 7). On the rhythm of Dhak, a traditional Bengali dance is then performed by both men and women to please Ma Durga popularly known as ‘Dhunuchi Naach’ (Plate 7, 8 & 9).

However when the respondents were asked whether they enjoy Durga Puja with the same euphoria compared with the celebrations in West Bengal, 83 per cent of them approved it as against the 17 per cent of them who did not hold the same opinion. Lack of similar ambience was stated to be one of the major reasons for not enjoying Durga Puja to the same extent as in West Bengal (Figure 4.18).

![Figure: 4.18](image.png)

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16
The Navapalli Association (Bengali association) additional secretary Sumit Mukherjee (59 years) says: “

_Durga Puja does not belong to Bengalis alone. It belongs to all as it has become a cosmopolitan affair. Outside the Puja pandals too, groups of well turned out people both Bengalis and Non-Bengalis, meet, laugh and interact. They can be seen digging zestfully into the plates of Bengali-style food from the local vendors_”.

Moreover, festivals combined with religion go hand in hand in establishing the identity of any migrant group. The common places of worship give an opportunity to the migrant groups to visit such places, to follow the customs and traditions specific to their religion and culture and to get acquainted and subsequently united with the people of the host society. The study shows that out of the total 1200 respondents only 4 per cent of Bengalis preferred visiting temple on daily basis and among them females outnumbered males and children. Festivals offered more occasions to the Bengali residents to visit temples and other places of worship than their usual routine (Figure 4.19).

![Bengali Migrants in Delhi: Frequency of Visits to the Place of Worship](image)

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015-16

Apart from religious functions and festive celebrations, every cultural group has its own traditions, rituals and customs. Though, these three terms look similar to each other yet there is a thin line of difference among them. ‘Custom’ implies something that one does out of habit but when these customs are handed over from one generation to the next generation, they become a ‘tradition’. At the same time, ‘ritual’ is used in the context of religious ceremonies that are performed according to an age-old prescribed order.
Therefore, the traditions, customs and rituals are important because they not only carry forward the shared values and goals from one generation to the other but also encourage migrants to create and share a mutual identity.

The survey reveals that the century old migration of Bengalis to Delhi is of great significance with regard to traditions and customs of the Bengali migrants (Table 4.4). More than 82 per cent of Bengalis still follow their traditional methods relating to the birth ceremonies, in contrast to this, 195 respondents out of 1200 which accounted for only 16 per cent of Bengali respondents followed the mixed methods (following traditions of both host society & Bengalis) while no one solely follows the local culture. When seen in respect of the ceremonies performed at the time of death, though the majority of respondents were adhered to traditional methods yet 5 per cent of them surprisingly followed the traditions of host society. The reason given for the adoption of the traditions of the host society included intercultural marriages among the younger generations. This increase in intercultural marriages has lead to the adoption of mixed methods not only for performing birth and death ceremonies but also for arranging marriage ceremonies. Almost three- fourths of the responding Bengalis appreciated the following of mixed methods during solemnizing marriages while one fourth of the population still followed the old traditional Bengali methods.

**Conclusion**

It can, thus, be concluded that Bengali migrants have most appropriately undergone transformation in their four important attributes of social identity i.e. language, food, dress and festivals during their stay in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. In order to preserve their language, Bengali migrants have adopted various means such as reading
Bengali newspapers; magazines; watching Bengali channels and interacting with people of their community at different platforms on different occasions. In addition to the above mentioned sources, Bengali Associations have also played an equally important role in preserving their culture especially through Addas. Bengalis’ association with their traditions and customs has thus remained intact. However, after adopting various means of transformation today their language is not just confined only to Bangla rather it has become a mix of Bengali-Hindi-English. Moreover, with the passage of time, the dietary habits/pattern of Bengali migrants residing in NCT of Delhi have also changed. These changes are more noticeable among younger generations as compared to older generations. However, there has been a noticeable change in the dressing pattern among Bengalis. They wear their traditional dresses not in their daily routine but only on various special occasions such as festivals; Durga Pujo; particular ceremonies etc.

A significant role in the life of Bengali migrants in retaining their social identity has also been played by religion and festivals. They still follow their Bengali customs and traditions related to birth and death ceremonies while during marriage ceremonies they tend to follow mixed methods indicating that they are mixing with the host society as well. As far as festivals are concerned, the Bengali festivals are no longer celebrated only by Bengali migrants. The Durga Puja celebration, for example, is patronized and awaited anxiously not only by the Bengalis but also by their non-Bengali families. Hence, the efforts made by the Bengali migrants to preserve and strengthen the manifestation of the attributes of their social, cultural and religious identity in their new place of living are commendable and need to be appreciated. The Bengali migrants have, thus, not only made physical adjustments in terms of their spatial distribution in the NCT of Delhi (as discussed in Chapter 3) but also exercised constant efforts to maintain their social, cultural and religious identity and uniqueness.