

# Socio-Economic Status of Bengali Refugee Community: An Empirical Study in Rehabilitated Colonies of Chhattisgarh

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**ABSTRACT:** The rehabilitation and resettlement project taken by Government of India for the Bengali refugees who came from East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh) is popularly known as Dandakaryana Development Authority started in 1958, established in three phases. The Dandakaryana Development Project in Surguja and Surajpur districts of Chhattisgarh provided all infrastructural facilities like roads, schools, health centers for men and animals, safe water bodies, agricultural land, house sites, etc. Over the time it is observed that the Bengali settlers due to Government support as well as owing to their own sincere labor they have developed to a great extent. The development indices are reflected in education, adoption of new innovations in agriculture and animal husbandry, employment, material status, economy, bargaining power, political representation, etc. With this background the present study covering 60 households purposefully covered to outline the socio-economic changes of the refugee Bengali and their ethnic boundaries maintained. The study observed that Bengali refugee community have proved their success in many fronts of their life. Their socio-cultural inclusive characters are reflected in the forms of festival, festivities, language, dress and attire which helped them in strengthening their economic and political lives and ethnic boundaries and in maintaining ethnic harmony with the host community.

## INTRODUCTION

Displacement of people is a worldwide human process. The modern development processes and formation and/or reintegration of nations have resulted in population movement beyond national boundaries. Along with that, the expansion and establishment of modern temples of development in the name of industries, irrigation projects, highways, hydro power projects like many have not only physically displaced the inhabitants, subsequently these became a burden on the nation to deal with

major issues like social justice and equity. Many times, the problem of refugees, migrants and displaced became a contentious issue for a nation. At destination these groups often interface with socio economic and cultural disruptions which affect the social fabric of their life and living.

In the past the South Asian nations like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka including India have suffered from the large-scale movement of population popularly known as migrants, displaced and refugees. In the context of India heavy inflow of population from the nations like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri-Lanka in different time

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periods has resulted in chronic problems. At destination inter ethnic relations for the migrants and the refugees centering to resource sharing with the host community creates imbalance and hostile relations among the groups. This in the passage of time not only deprives the host from accessing their due rights over welfare programs but also creates ill feelings in their minds.

#### THEORETICAL PARADIGM

Ethno-social problems are most crucial and sensitive phenomenon of the contemporary world, irrespective of developed and developing countries. Since Second World War the study of refugees has entered into almost all social sciences. This has intensified ethnic issues giving new shapes and conceptual understanding which have made ethno-social problems as the most crucial and sensitive phenomenon also observed in India (Srivastava, 2003). Due to the multi-lingual, multi-racial, and pluri-cultural features of India, it has become necessary to understand, analyze and interpret the inter-group relations in terms of mutual adjustment, mutual attractions or repulsions, prejudices and superiority or inferiority.

The social and behavioral scientists debated on the nature and causes of various ethnic formations. The theoretical debate between Primordialists and Instrumentalists centers round the nature of ethnic group. The Primordialists view this phenomenon as immutable and believe it as a 'product of natural law' (Geertz, '63), while instrumentalists rationalized the ethnicity and the ethnic group formation as a 'product of power struggle and they believe the cultural factors to be epiphenomenal of such a process' (Bentley, '83). In response to this arguments Barth ('69) questioned on the boundary problem of ethnicity. Pathy ('87) suggested that ethnic groupings need not necessarily be situationally constituted entities and the cultural and the linguistic background can hardly be treated as secondary. Utilitarians such as Cohen ('74) considered the 'interest aspects of ethnic groupings as more vital and emphasized the utilitarian and rational bent of ethnic groupings.

Recent studies in developed countries have brought a new form of debate between 'assimilationists' and 'integrationists' and between

those who emphasized on 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects of ethnicity. Gordon ('76) as one of the widely recognized assimilationists suggested that there is a close correspondence between the class status and ethnic status. The Marxist perspective of analysis treated ethnic differences as class distinctions. Mainly they focus on the political aspects of resource mobilization. For them the development of capitalism produced the conditions for the rise of ethnic consciousness.

The neo-Marxists in Third World situation on racial and ethnic conflict provided an in-depth understanding (Wolpe, '87). They have exposed the fallacy of the basis of primordialism and discarded the formation of racial or ethnic categories as epiphenomenal to class and explained them in terms of ruling class conspiracy, rather they have emphasized the role of race and ethnicity in shaping the structuring principles of social formations (Hall, '80). Empirical studies have reflected that the interest groups within an ethnic group become more functional due to the economic and political interests. Such interest groups vary according to the size, objective, cohesiveness and durability. In a complex social scenario, the social groups may have cordial contacts with each other, however, they do not mingle to build social capital rather generate mutual suspicions and stereotypes, whereas, ethnically defined residential groups project solid social cohesion and political identities. The degree of access of the migrants into the life way processes of the host society varies on the basis of place and goal of the migrant community, type of legal and social support system and access into the welfare resources of the host society.

In case of trans-national migration in a pluralistic form the host nation faces the problem of offering citizenship. This has raised new concepts like 'transnational citizenship' (Baubock, '94), multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, '95a), differentiated citizenship (Young, '90), 'neo-republican citizenship', 'cultural citizenship' (Turner, '93) and 'post-national membership' (Soysal, '94). These scholars have viewed that in order to address the problem of social polarization and deprivation of ethnic minorities, it is necessary to encourage organizations of the immigrant communities and other disadvantaged

social groups to access the policy making processes and demonstrate the relevance of their ideas, aspirations, resources, and skills——. This is the reason the Frankfurt Declaration entitled 'Towards a New Municipal Policy for Multicultural Integration in Europe' (Clare, '92), recommended policies regarding the effective participation by immigrants in local political life.

The Indian society is based on the principle of unity and diversity and characterized by its multi-ethnic and socio-cultural groups. The pluralistic status of the country is attributable to the processes of migration and redistribution of the boundaries of the States on the basis of linguistic characteristics. The inflow of immigrants across the linguistic borders generates majority and minority continuum. In India the ethnic associations and ethnic identifications have been studied with some reference to their adaptive and adjustive functions (Nair, '78). Most of the ethnic associations render primary group functions to their migrant members. Punekar ('74) viewed that ethnic identity of a caste is based on the common status of rank in the caste hierarchy, belief in a common origin, further reinforced by centuries of structural exclusiveness, cultural identity, living in a contiguous area and restrictions on commensality between caste groups.

The studies of assimilation and retention continuum, both in India and outside, have shown that the immigrants and the native communities often tend to show on the one hand the desire to assimilate at certain level and on the other maintain their distinctive identities (Mythili, 74; Nair, 78). Thus, an immigrant not only identifies himself as a member of his commune, but also expresses class character to definite social and economic class and occupational category. It is assumed that the occupational categories act differently for their specific and shared interests. They use ethnic background as a resource. The occupational categories associate themselves to express unity on the basis of occupation for business interest, caste for social transaction, region for socio-economic security, religion for moral and political support and geographical statehood for defensive interest and so on (Panigrahi, '93). The associations based on occupations help the traders to safeguard their trade and economic interests and often act as a

corporate group, however, maintain their exclusiveness with regard to their ethnic origin (Panigrahi and Panda '98, 2000), rights over welfare programs but also creates ill feelings in their minds.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study tried to find out couple of related studies made earlier so as to have a research understanding. Guha ('59) has substantially contributed in his study on 'Social tension among the refugees in Bengal and the role of social sciences in nation building'. He suggested Government to understand the problems of refugees of the then East Pakistan and to improve their living conditions. Guha's book "Studies in social tensions among the refugees from Eastern Pakistan" was a masterpiece based on interdisciplinary approach to understand ethnic conflict. During Colonial era migrations were patronized by the colonial administrators. This has been well reflected by different studies in Central India (Bose, '62; Goswami, '63; Chaliha, '65; Prabhakar, '71; Gallagher, '73) and in North East India (Chatterjee, '55; Bhagabati, '88). Anthropologists and Sociologists study the social and cultural consequences of population movement on social and institutional relations (Acharya, 66; Goswami, 71, '75). Choucri ('78) viewed that population size of the migrants may function as a political parameter when it generates population pressure upon resources, leading to conflict, generating tensions and further demographic issues. Economist Chen (94) looks at the economic dimensions like the impact of migration on economic resources both at native and destinations, which have resulted in economy centered conflicts. Choucri (74) viewed that "during last half-century, three types of primary migration have been most common: permanent settlement migration, temporary labor migration and refugee movement" These movements of populations have generated both positive and negative effects depending upon the social, economic and political situation of the host society. Migration research by Anthropologists often deals with the controversy of integration and/ or assimilation. In Indian context the "Salad Bowl" has gained more importance in the sense let every ethnic group maintain its specificity and enrich the overall cultural fabric. The melting pot ideology initially seems to have attracted many

sociologists but scholars like Harzig and Hoerder (2009) viewed America not as a nationality but as a Trans nationality. They also viewed that migrants often include the refugees, so refugee related researches have attracted the multidisciplinary methodologies. Das (2016) in his seminal editorial on the 'Anthropology of Memories, Reconstruction and Relocation' build the past from a visit to his ancestral village of Manikpur in the district of Sylhet after six decades. He observed a new setting, a new set of people, and new priorities with a continuity of stigma, tension and uncertainties in the mind of the people.

#### BENGALI REFUGEES IN INDIA

Partition of India created a new type of migration popularly known as massive displacement which resulted in utmost physical difficulties and severe mental trauma on individual and collective psyche. The Mount Batten Plan of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947 envisaged the setting up of Boundary Commissions to demarcate the boundary of the divided territories of Punjab, Bengal and Assam. This affected the amicably settled Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of this region, resulting post – communal violence and massive displacement of population who were forced to flee in different directions in search of a safest place. In subsequent period the post-colonial Indian government and its constituent States had to share the burden of the refugees in the form of provisioning relief, rehabilitation and resettlement with respect to their education, employment, medical aids, house sites etc with an aim to minimize the loss of livelihood, mental agonies, human potential, disruption of communal harmony, cultural disintegration and many other human rights.

#### RESETTLEMENT OF BENGALI REFUGEES IN CENTRAL INDIA

One such Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R and R) project taken by Government of India for the Bengali refugees who came from East Pakistan (presently known as Bangladesh) is popularly known as Dandakaryana Development Authority (thus known as DNK Project) started in 1958 (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2012). These Bengali migrants came into India in three phases: The first phase settled in West Bengal, the second phase settled in Assam and Tripura, while the third phase settled in Central Indian

states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh including the region of newly formed State of Chhattisgarh, while a small section of this population was sent to Andaman Islands. In Orissa they have been rehabilitated in Koraput (undivided) Government of India (2015) while in Chhattisgarh they are rehabilitated in Bastar region (undivided).

The Dandakaryana Development project turned a new leap in the life and culture of the tribal people of the area. The DNK project area is filled with dense forest, countless streams, pleatues and affected by high incidence of malaria. The project provided all infrastructural facilities like roads, schools, health centers, safe water bodies, agricultural land, house sites, etc for the refugees and animals. The resettlement of the Bengalis in Malkangiri Villages (Thus known as MV) was opposed by the Koyas in 1962 with the apprehension that the non tribals resettled in their village will exploit their natural resource base. Around 5000 Koyas in their traditional dress with bow and arrow ventilated their grievances against the rehabilitated refugee Bengali people (Tripathy, 2018).

Over the time during last couple of decades it is observed that the Bengali settlers due to Government support as well as due to their own sincere labor they have developed to a great extent. The development indices are reflected in their educational achievements, adoption of new innovations in agriculture and animal husbandry, employment, material status, economy, bargaining power, political representation, etc. However, such changes are not visible in the entire region among all the Bengali households. Quite sizeable Bengali households are deprived of accessing the benefits of development. This has also created ill feeling among the host communities which have been well studied (Panigrahi, 2006). With this background the present study has purposefully carried out to outline the socio-economic status of the refugee Bengali immigrants rehabilitated in Surajpur and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh who are popularly known as refugee Bengalis.

#### STUDY METHODOLOGY

##### Objectives

- To find out the socio-economic status of the refugee Bengali households.

- To find out the accessibility of the refugee Bengali households to various basic services delivery institutions concerning to health, banking, post office, school, veterinary and agriculture.
- To identify the material status of the refugee Bengali households (crocery, electronic gadgets and other household assets).
- To assess the linguistic adjustments of the refugee Bengali households with the local language, dialect and life way processes.
- And to document various festivals and festivities practiced by the Bengali households and ethnic identities maintained by the refugee Bengali households.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

The study purposively adopted Surajpur and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh, since both the districts are adjacent to each other and carries a sizeable refugee Bengalis rehabilitated colonies. Secondly, looking at the distribution of refugee Bengali rehabilitated colonies the study covered one Gram Panchayat from each district having highest Bengali rehabilitated colonies. Thirdly, one Bengali rehabilitated colony from each Gram Panchayat and one colony in Ambikapur urban centre was selected for intensive study. Finally, 15 Bengali refugee households who had come in first phase of settlement identified from each selected colony equally by using Tippets Table for in-depth study. Thus, the study has covered 60 households distributed in four villages representing three Gram Panchayats and one colony in urban Municipal Corporation of two districts of Chhattisgarh.

The study used multiple tools to explore data from the respondents. More particularly, the study adopted interview schedule and various guidelines for taking case studies and in-depth interviews. In addition to, observation method was also used to strengthen the data base. The quantitative data have been processed with the help of Excel sheets, and percentage distribution, making averages, while the qualitative data have been processed in a descriptive form.

#### PEOPLE AND AREA: A PROFILE

##### *Household Demography*

The study covered a total population of 294 of which male accounts 143(48.63%) and female accounts 151(51.63%). Around 58.84 per cent of the total study populations were reported as married, 37.07 per cent were unmarried and 4.08 per cent were widow/ widower. With respect to the ethnic distribution all the 60 households belonging to Other Backward Caste groups and general category. Originally at their native in East Bengal these refugee Bengali households were considered as *Nomo Shudro*. However, Government of Madhya Pradesh (undivided) and present Government of Chhattisgarh has not declared them as Scheduled Caste, as a result, they are deprived of many special provisions provided by government which are meant for such caste groups placed in social ladder in India. Therefore these refugee Bengali in the year 2005 have formed a social organization popularly known as “Chhattisgarh Bang Samaj” and have been raising certain basic issues confronted by the community including the demand for enlisting/ recognizing them as scheduled group as per the provision of Indian constitution. The age distribution of the study population is divided into five sub-groups like children (below 6 years) who comprises of 7.14 per cent, adolescents (7 to 16 years) comprises of 22.10 per cent, while the youth share 47.95 per cent of populations and the adult comprises of 22.78 per cent in the total population.

##### *Educational Status*

The educational achievement of the refugee Bengali population is categorized as non-starter, having primary, secondary, graduate, post graduate and above and illiterate. Around 14.28 per cent are non-starters, 34.45 per cent are having primary, 33.67 per cent are having secondary, while 12.92 per cent are graduates and only 4.76 per cent are post graduates. The data reflects that illiteracy among the Bengalis is comparatively less while higher study is also not significant. With respect to the medium of education the data reflects that in grandfather’s generations around 38.33 per cent were educated in Hindi. In father’s generation the medium of education was also hindi (96.66%), while in children generation development of English medium schools gave

opportunities for English medium to 60 per cent. The data shows that the refugees in first two generations co-opted with the dominant State language and regional dialect in their education system.

#### *Disease, Treatment and Hygiene Status*

Around 51.66 per cent refugee Bengalis live in kutcha houses, 31.66 per cent in pucca houses and 16.66 per cent in semi pucca houses. Around 68.32 per cent households who by and large have kutcha houses show that they do not have economic strength to build pucca houses. This is justified when one looks at the BPL status of these households in study villages which tunes to 68.33 per cent. The study surveyed various water bodies available and utilized by the households for various purposes like drinking, cooking and other purposes. The major water sources include private tube wells available within the household, public water tap and public dug wells. The data reflects that around 84.44 per cent of the household are largely depending upon the private tube well located within their house hold. Construction of bore well by the refugee Bengalis costs around Rs.80,000/- to 90,000/- which is basically used for multi purposes including agriculture. Around 30 per cent households have taken loan from banks for this purpose. Around 15.55 per cent of the household depends on public tap water and dug well for drinking, cooking and other purposes. The sanitation practices of the Bengali refugees were collected. The study shows that all the households are using septic toilets located within their household premises for defecation. None of the household members defecate in open and pollute the environment.

The general awareness level among the Bengalis regarding the basic health and hygiene is comparatively high, for the reason that they are more informative about the hygienic life and living and services available in the region. Around 55 per cent households are able to access government hospital to avail health services during last one year. Secondly, the economic strength of the Bengali households is comparatively better which helps them to access private health services (58.33%). None of the households take any treatment support from Baiga and witchcraft, rather all of them prefers allopathic treatment as the best solution to overcome diseases. However, performance of different pujas and to satisfy

different god and goddesses and using *tabij* and *dhagas* with beliefs for a good health of the family members and for cure from the diseases are popularly used and is the part of their customary practices.

#### *Occupational and Income Status*

The occupational distribution of the household members was surveyed with a purpose to know the type of occupations adhered by the refugee Bengali community. It was observed that around 71.42 per cent of the Bengali families' have adopted agriculture as their primary occupation, while 9.34 per cent are involved in various types of business. Around 9.89 per cent of the total population is employed in private sector and 4.94 per cent are working as Government teachers and 2.74 per cent are in Government SECL. None of the family worked as wage labors. The annual household income of Bengali refugees shows that around 1.66 per cent have income ranging from Rs. 50,000 to 80,000. Around 6.66 per cent have income ranging from Rs.81,000 to 1.00 lakh and around 33.33 per cent have income between Rs.1.1 lakh to 2 lakh, while 31.66 per cent have income between Rs.2.1 lakh to 3.00 lakh, 15 per cent have income ranging between Rs. 2.1 lakh to 4.5 lakh and 11.66 per cent have income above 4.6 lakhs per annum. Around 26.66 per cent households who are basically in Government services and in big business have a handsome monthly income.

#### *Possession of Identity Proofs*

All the Bengali refugee households have voter Id card, Aadhar card and bank passbook, while 21.66 per cent have MGNREGS card, 96.66 per cent have income tax card, 78.33 per cent have PDS card and 43.33 per cent have post office passbook. Though the Government has the provision of wage employment opportunity under MGNREGA but Bengalis neither come forward to avail this nor claim any unemployment wage labour works under MGNREGA. They consider wage employment or selling of labors to others is of low social value. It negatively affects the social status of the family. Secondly, because of their innovative and creative personality they feel more important to be engaged in household activities which are productive by nature.

#### *Village infrastructure*

The study tried to find out the location and distance of service institutions from the study villages.

In case of Ravindranagar there are few service centers available within the village while the bank and college are located at a distance of four kilometers from the village and hospital, post office, high school and animal husbandry center are located at a distance of one kilometer from the village. In case of Silphili many service centers like hospital, post office, bank, primary school, secondary school, high school, electric office and PDS center are available within the village while college and animal husbandry center is located at a distance of one kilometer from the village. In case of Bhagwanpur many service centers like hospital, bank, primary school, secondary school, high school, electric office and PDS center are available within the village, while college and post office are located at a distance of three kilometers from the village. In case of Digma many service centers like hospital, primary school, secondary school, and PDS center are available within the village, while bank, high school, electric office and animal husbandry center is located at a distance of one kilometer from the village, but the post office, college is located at a distance of four kilometers from the village. The service centres like bank, high school, electric office, hospital, pot office and animal husbandry center though located in other villages at a distance but the households are quite accessible due to their requirements in day to day living.

#### *Social and Economic Status*

##### 1. Migration

The study covered 60 households from Surajpur and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh. It was found that the maximum migration of the Bengalis was reported during the period between 1951 to 1955 (65%), while during the year 1948 to 1950 the migration was 14 per cent and during the year 1956 to 1965 it was reported to the tune of 7.00 per cent only. The places of migrations i.e. the camps from which the Bengali refugees have come and sheltered to their present colonies, the data show that the movement of households from Bangladesh have taken place in five phases. Initially they were staying in transit camps established in different parts of Madhya Pradesh (4 nos), Chhattisgarh (12 nos), Jharkhand (2 nos), Maharashtra (2 nos), Odhisha (1 no.) and West Bengal (10 nos). By and large the poor refugee Bengalis today do not migrate to distant lands /outside on seasonal

basis in search of employment and livelihood. This is basically because of the psychological imprint of their past forceful migration which goes with insecurities as explained by the old before them.

##### 2. Agriculture

The study tried to document the land holding status of the refugee Bengali households. As per the rehabilitation provision each household was given with 7.00 acres of land to do agriculture and to meet their livelihood at the beginning. Around 25.00 per cent of the household's possess land less than 1 acre, while 51.66 per cent have land ranging 1.1 to 3 acre, 21.66 per cent have land ranging 3.1 to 5 acre and only 1.66 per cent of household have land above 5.00 acres. None of the household reported as land less. Few households have either sold their land or divided the land holding among brothers in subsequent period. Around 78.33 per cent households have irrigation facility to their land, while 21.66 per cent of the households do not have irrigation facility. The Bengali households have adopted multi-cropping system which includes cereal varieties like wheat and paddy. In addition, they are also cultivating vegetables and floriculture. The Bengali farmers are comparatively advanced and express their proactiveness to adopt new introductions. The variations in cropping pattern adopted in the study universe were also accounted. Around 38.33 per cent households cultivate wheat, 46.66 per cent cultivate paddy, 28.33 per cent cultivate maize, 60.00 per cent cultivates vegetables and only 5.00 per cent households practice floriculture farming.

The Bengali farmers are using various agro-inputs which can be categories as seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, pesticide and agro-implement in their agriculture. A look into the list of agro-inputs used shows that Bengali farmers have adopted varieties of chemical and modern agro-inputs. The study also attempted to document the place of purchase of various agro-inputs and implements by the households. It is observed that there are few places in and around their camps from where they purchase all agro-inputs. They are Ajabnagar, Ambikapur, Ravindranagar and Silphili in Surajpur district and Bhagwanpur, Digma and Ambikapur in Surguja district. Looking at the agriculture development and demands of various agro-inputs these semi urban centers are

having agro-centers owned by private parties. These small markets are basically dominated by the Bengali shop keepers. The Bengali farmers have their affinity to purchase various agro-inputs from these shops. These shops also sell the agro-inputs on part payment basis.

Labor type used in the agriculture by the Bengali households was looked into. It is believed that the advanced farmers are using the hired labor. The field observation shows that use of hired and own labor in agriculture field is equally important. The data shows that around 70.00 per cent households using their own labor in their agriculture and 75.00 per cent households are using hired labor also in addition to their own labor. Bengalis are laborious and basically agriculture farmers by nature so they do not hesitate to make use of their household labor resources including the household women labor.

### 3. Marketing of Agro produces

The study tried to understand the places of disposals of agro-produces by the households. Most of the households are disposing vegetables. Around 29 households who cultivate vegetable farming on commercial basis dispose their produces at the door step to the vendors who come from the nearby markets. For others the place of marketing of agro produces like vegetables and flowers in both the districts of study universe are the nearby semi urban points where they attend daily market and also weekly markets. These market places include Ambikapur, Ravindranagar, Silphili in Surajpur district and Bhagwanpur, Digma, Ambikapur in Surguja district which are located within a range of 3 to 5 kms. These Bengali households are advanced agriculture farmers. They have adopted new agriculture practices as advised by the Agriculture Extension Officer. Adoption of all these new practices many times cost them more which they meet taking loan under Kisan Credit Card. Many of the households suggested that any adoption of new agro-practices must be efficiency oriented in terms of more production, less consumption of water, less disease prone and bring more income. The study attempted to know about the selling of produces and the number of households who have sold different types of crops during last production year. In Surajpur district the data indicate that around 17 households have sold cereals, 18 households have

sold vegetables and only three households have sold flowers. In Surajpur district similarly 21 households have sold cereals, 15 households have sold vegetables while only three households have sold flower in the market. The animal resources of the households were surveyed in terms of possession and purposes of possession of animals. The Bengalis do not rear large animals like buffalo and medium animals like pig, goat and sheep. They keep cow for milk and to use cow dung in agriculture. The poultries are kept for self consumption. Few households have small ponds where they rear fish basically for household consumption. The possession of animals as per different types includes large (cow, ox), medium (calf) and small (duck, hen, chick, cock) animals.

### *Social status*

#### 1. Maintenance of Marriage Networks:

Marriage is a social institution which has a social support guided by societal norms. Over the time some changes have been incorporated in this institution. Social network plays a very important role in marriage. Keeping this in mind the study emphasized to find out the status of marriage network for daughter taking and daughter giving across generations starting from grand fathers to the children generation while taking or giving daughters for marriage. In grandparent generation refugee Bengalis are basically confined to the State and their community boundaries that had migrated along with them. This with respect to the daughter taking from within the State tune to 40.00 per cent, while it was reported to the tune of 33.33 per cent in father's generation and in children generation it reduced to 23.32 per cent. Daughter taking from outside the State but from within the community was reported to the tune of 30.00 per cent grandparent generation, which increased to 35.33 per cent in father's generation and 45.00 per cent in children generation. The data in this respect when compared between two generations shows that there is a rise in the per cent of marriage within the State from grandfather's generation to father's generation. With respect to daughters giving within the State the data reflect that it was 21.66 per cent in grandfather generation, became 24.99 per cent in father generation and 8.30 per cent in children generation. The data when looked into the status of daughter giving outside the State in all the three generations the trend has



increased between grandfather's generation and father generation. The data show that there is an increasing trend going beyond the region in the selection of the life partners across the generation, however, marriage boundaries follows the ethnic boundaries at the time of selection of the life partners.

### 2. Status of Friend's Network

Friend's network in one's life is very important for survival. It not only provides a protective net but also gives an opportunity for interaction and adoption for change. Keeping this in mind the study tried to document the friend's network of the refugee Bengalis. It was observed that the friend's network in grandfather generation, father generation and in children generation was mostly confined within the Bengali community. Both in grandparents and father's generation are confined to the Bengali community both in occupational and social platforms. These platforms gave them not only social security but also economic support. The friend's network in children generation included members from both the Bengali and non-Bengali community. Since the children are attending different educational institutions which are built looking at market needs, therefore, it provides them new platform to interact with children of other linguistic groups.

### 3. Membership in WSHG and Bengali Youth Club

Membership in different associations provides an opportunity to the people to get both economic and social support at the time of need. Therefore, the study tried to find out the status and distribution of the refugee Bengali households in local Women Self Help Groups (WSHG) and Youth clubs. The data reflect that only 36.66 per cent of the households have the membership in local WSHGs. This membership with WSHG in Surajpur is more as compared to Surguja. When asked refugee Bengali women with their low level of membership in WSHG they replied that many times such platform creates problem than benefitting them. Therefore, they do not prefer to become a member of WSHG. Regarding membership in Bengali youth club around 91.66 per cent Bengali youth have their membership. They feel such platforms as protective platform for the community and community interest particularly in market situations when the Bengalis are interfaced with multiple communities for various interests. Names of WSHG in the study area

found during the study are Grihlakshmi Sewa Sahayta Samuh, Jai Maa Durga Seva Sahayta Samuh, Radha Krishna Seva Sahayata Sewa Samuh, Radhe Shyam Mahila Samiti, Sangarsh Mahila Samiti, Suraj Mukhi Sewa Sahayta Samuh. Bengali youths clubs found during the study are Chhattisgarh Bang Samaj, Sarvajanik Durga Puja Samiti, Aadya Mahila Bang Samiti, Bhagwanpur Durga Badi Sangh and Nav Yuvak Sangh.

### *Material Status of Household*

The material statuses of the household with respect to kitchen items, other household items were surveyed. The basic objective behind is to assess the economic affordability as well as the attitude of the Bengali households to possess materials like television, fridge, cooler, sofa, almirah, dining table, 2-wheeler and 4-wheeler. The data shows that around 98.33 percent of the households possess television, 80.00 per cent possess fridge, 68.33 possess cooler, 51.66 percent possess sofa, 96.66 possess almirah, 31.66 per cent possess 2-wheeler, whereas only 18.33 possess 4-wheelers. Many times, it was told by respondent that even if their economy doesn't permit them to go for such products, but they are compelled to have such products due to market forces and social pressure.

### *Linguistic Adjustment*

Bengali refugees are living in Chhattisgarh for last 6 decades. With this long duration of stay it is expected that the refugee Bengali's will be imbibing local languages to a great extent. Keeping this in mind the present study tried to explore the linguistic adjustment of the Bengali's. The data reflects that they have adjusted linguistically while preserving their distinct identity. In the grandfather generation migrants were speaking Hindi or the local dialect Surgujia. Their phonetics are still rooted in Bangali language; thus, their pronunciations are syncretic. In father and children generation they speak Hindi and Surgujia impeccably and have inculcated the local accent. Simultaneously, their command over Bengali language is also significant. But the local accent, however, has seeped into their Bangla to some extent. As a result, the difference in lexicon and accent while they speak Hindi and Bangla is apparent across generations hence, the adjustments. The data with respect to the language knowledge for various

purposes like writing reading and speaking by different generations are taped to understand variations in learning across generations.

The study also attempted specifically to know separately the skill of writing, reading and speaking of different languages by different generations of the refugee Bengalis. With respect to writing knowledge there is a substantial reduction in writing skill of Bengali in children generation when compared with grandfather generation in both the study districts. Knowledge of writing Hindi has substantially increased when compared from grandfather generation to children generation this trend is also observed in case of writing English. Overall the data shows that younger generations have lost writing skill in Bengali and have adopted English and Hindi because of market, educational and employment needs. For father's generation knowing Hindi became a market need to interact with the local host community who largely influence the business in the market. Therefore, Bengali households who have business in the market are forced to learn Hindi and Surgujia dialect as a market need. All the refugee Bengali households across the generations speak Bengali in their house as spoken language among the family members, kith and kin and among the villagers.

#### *Festival and Festivities*

Religious affiliation and observation of various festivals of a community helps in maintaining their ethnic boundary. Celebrating such festive occasions not only reinforces their belongingness with the community but also helps in maintaining social distance from other non-Bengali communities. In long run this contributes refugee community to maintain their inclusive character in relation to the host community. Therefore the present study also focused to document the festival and festivities carried out by the Bengali community. The study reflects that refugee Bengalis celebrate various festivals and festivities related to Bengali culture. A few of them includes *nababarsha*, *buddhpurnima*, *thakur rabindranath jayanti*, *loknath baba birthday*, *jamaisoshti*, *guru purnima*, *naagpanchmi*, *janmashtami*, *mohalaya*, *durgapuja*, *lokhipuja*, *shyama/kali puja*, *bhaiphota*, *jagadhatripuja*, *shri krishna bhajan by anukool thakur followers*, *vivekanand jayanti*, *makarsankranti*, *neelshoshti*,

*sheetalshoshti*, *ramkrishna thakur jayanti*, *maasharda birthday*, *saraswatipuja*, *shivratri*, *charakpuja*, *annapurnapuja*, *basantipuja* along with other festivals such as *holi*, *deepawali*, *rakshabandhan* etc. Across caste and class, they purchase new clothes and prepare specific dishes in accordance with the festivals. The celebrations are focused on socialising with kith andkins. The preparations are made by a few households together mostly by the women of the families. Their social bonding over festivals is relatively high.

The Durga Puja congregation in urban Ambikapur is mostly dominated by Brahmins, Kshatriyas and other upper castes who had migrated before independence due to the erstwhile East-Pakistan crisis. The refugee Bengalis whose settlements are on the suburbs and peripheries of the city faced discrimination from the pre-independence-migrant Bengalis. Following which, they started their own congregations and puja mandap near their villages and localities. The rituals are, however, carried out by Brahmin priests, though the Nomo Shudros have equal space for participation and caste discrimination is relatively obscure. The congregations are near their own localities, which in turn boost economic prospects for them, as opposed to the centralized urban congregation to which they had to travel all the way, for worshipping and business purposes as well.

#### CONCLUSION

The present study focused on the Bengali refugees of Surajpur and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh with the sample coverage of 60 households distributed in four villages representing three Gram Panchayats and one Notified Area Council of two districts of Chhattisgarh. Bengali refugees are living in Chhattisgarh for last 6 decades. With this long duration of stay it is expected that the refugee Bengali's will be imbibing local socio-cultural elements to a great extent. Keeping this in mind the present study tried to explore the linguistic adjustment of the Bengali's. Refugee Bengalis have adjusted linguistically while preserving their distinct identity. In the grandfather generation migrants were speaking Hindi or the local dialect Surgujia. Their phonetics are still rooted in Bangla; thus their pronunciations

are syncretic. In father and children generation they speak Hindi and Surgujia impeccably and have inculcated the local accent. Simultaneously, their command over Bangla is also significant. But the local accent, however, has seeped into their Bangla to some extent. Religious affiliation and observation of various festivals by the Bengali community help them in maintaining their ethnic boundaries. Celebrating such occasions not only reinforced their belongingness with the community but also helped in maintaining social distance with other non-Bengali communities. In long term this contributed to the Bengali refugee community to maintain their inclusive characters.

At the end one can say that the Bengali refugees who have come from East Bengal in 1948 finally settled in Surajpur and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh in 1965. The government settled them with a package of agriculture and homestead land in special colonies, but during 6 decades of their settlement Bengali's have prospered to a great extent in their life and living. As an industrious and sincere community, the Bengali's have proved their success in all fronts of their life. Their inclusive characters are reflected in the forms of festival, festivities, language, dress and attire which helped them in strengthening their ethnic boundaries in relation to the host community. Quite a good number of refugee Bengali households became successful in carrying their trade and commerce in the market while competing with non-Bengali's. Bengali's are not basically traders; however, the fortunate's because of large size feeding Bengali population they became successful entrepreneur in their profession.

The degree of maintaining ethnic boundaries by different generation of the Bengali community when compared to grandfather generation, in the father's generations one finds that they have adopted various local characters to cope with, while the children generation have adopted English education and found a new platform which again minimized their scope to learn the local language and/or the Surgujia dialect. During last decade Bengali as an organized community are able to bargain with the State apparatus with certain community demands. They are also able to avail all market opportunities which helped them to modernize their agriculture, access to banking facilities, possessing all Id proofs etc. As a result,

they became a part of the mainstream development and no more behind the various market trends and able to cope with the market determined social and economic development processes. The refugee Bengalis have participated in all democratic processes like fight in the local elections, mobilizing Bengalis in favour of political parties, casting their votes in favour of political parties and personalities attached political philosophies. This encouraged them to form socio-cultural organizations within the refugee Bengali community and able to reflect their ethnic strength and bargaining with the State apparatus for their community interest.

To conclude one can, say that the study has identified the socio-cultural processes and various mechanisms adopted by a refugee Bengali community which have brought in prosperity and growth and how they maintain harmonic relationship with the local non-Bengali communities. The forceful physical evacuation of the Bengalis from the east-Pakistan (Now known as Bangladesh) though have rooted them out from a cultural base of natives, but at destination because of the co-opting character of the Bengali community they became successful in reestablishing their socio-cultural base using different primordial ethnic markers and hence able to maintain ethnic boundaries and made the use of these social base for successful survival in a host land.

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