

Unit Nine: Diaspora

Lesson 2

“Banglatown” in East London

British-Bangladeshis, also known as British-Bengalis, are an important part of the Bangladeshi diaspora or those of Bangladeshi origin who are living abroad. Almost half of all British-Bangladeshis live in London, especially in the East London boroughs, of which Tower Hamlets has the highest concentration.

Today a tourist who is new to London may well decide to make her way over to the East End of the city, to visit Banglatown. After exiting the Tube Station there she might follow the signs that point to Brick Lane, a street that has gained certain notoriety from Monica Ali's best-selling novel of the same name, which was also made into a movie. She may decide to try out one of the many Bangladeshi restaurants she sees there for lunch. Sitting at one of the tables with a window onto the street, she might notice that the street signs are not just in English but also in Bengali. And the lamp-posts are in green and red - the colors of the Bangladeshi flag. In fact everywhere she looks she finds visual cues of the Bangladeshi, and even more specifically, the Sylheti presence in the area. Storefronts advertise flights from London to Sylhet, some on Bangladesh Biman (the national airline of Bangladesh) and others on Air Sylhet, a private airline company formed by British Bangladeshis. There is a sign for Sonali Bank - the major state-owned commercial bank of Bangladesh. There is a food store advertising frozen fish from Sylhet's Surma River. She watches two elderly men with long, grey beards enter the store; they are dressed in long white tunics, baggy pants and white head caps. She sees a group of teenage girls walking down the street in animated conversation. One is dressed in a black burkah and the others are in jeans and long shirts, along with bright sequined hijabs on their heads. Looking through her London guidebook, she reads about how this neighborhood is in “Banglatown”.

In 2001 British Bangladeshi leaders, including many of the second-generation activists, led a successful bid via the Tower Hamlets council to gain the official designation of “Banglatown” for Brick Lane and its surrounding neighbourhoods. With the help of street signs and an advertising campaign, the hope was to give the area a distinct cultural identity that would be attractive to tourists and thus beneficial for Bangladeshi businesses located there. In fact the area has a number of visible Bangladeshi landmarks, such as Altab Ali Park, the Kobi Nazrul Cultural Centre and the Shohid Minar Monument. Along with the official designation of Banglatown, these landmarks are matters of considerable pride for many British Bangladeshis, symbols of their hard-won presence and political voice in Britain.

A Choose the correct answer from the alternatives:

1x5=5

(a) Where is Bangla Town-----

- i. In the east london ii. In the Boroughs iii. In the east end of the city iv. In the heart of london

(b) The antonym of the word “beneficial”-----

- i. alluring ii. harmful iii. risky iv. fatal

(c) The synonym of ‘Cues’ is-----

- i. list ii. signals iii. messages iv. news

(d) How many British Bangladeshis live in London-----

- i. All of them ii. Half of them iii. Some of them iv. Most of them

(e) What is the meaning of the word ‘origin’-----

- i. life ii. locality iii. where a person is living iv. background

B. Answer the following Question:

2x5=10

- (a) Where do most Bangladeshis live?
 (b) How can a tourist enjoy himself?
 (c) How is Monica Ali related to Brick Lane?
 (d) What are some of the Landmarks that reflect the pride of British Bangladeshis?
 (e) What do you know about Bricklane?

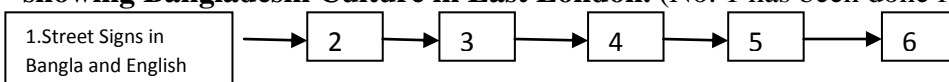
2. Read the passage and complete the table below with the given information.

1x10=10

Who/what	Source	What	where
British-Bangladeshis	Bangladeshi origin	Important part of (i)-----	(ii)-----
(iii)-----	British-Bangladeshis	(iv) -----	East London
(v)-----	Many Bangladeshi restaurant	A Sylheti presence Area	(vi)-----
(vii)-----	having notoreity	(viii)-----	Bangla Town
Street signs	Written both in (ix)-----	Visual cues of Bangladesh	(x)-----

Or

Based on your reading of the Passage below, make short notes in each of the boxes in the flow-chart showing Bangladeshi Culture in East London. (No. 1 has been done for you)



3. Summarize the text.