

# An outline of the immigration pattern of the Pakistani community in Britain

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The trend towards numerically significant immigration of non-white peoples had already begun during the First World War. Some people from India, the Caribbean islands and Africa were recruited to work in various army units, the chemical industry, munitions factories and related industries. This recruitment was mirrored in the Second World War and such workers formed the basis of the immigration surge of the 1950's and hence Britain's new ethnic minorities. (Jones and Welhengama, 2000: 1)

The main characteristic of Pakistani migration to Britain is voluntary and for economic reasons (Dahya: 25). It is further characterised by the migrants' areas of origin and their socio-economic background. Around 95 per cent of migrants are of rural origin, while the remainder originate from urban areas such as Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Sialkot. The migrants come from a limited number of villages. These areas are: Mirpur district in Azad Kashmir, Campbellpur sub-district, Peshawar and villages in Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat and Lyallpur.

It was a well established tradition for young men to emigrate for a few years, to earn and save money and eventually return to their villages. During the inter-war period, some of the merchant seamen from the first three areas mentioned above settled at various British seaports, becoming the forerunners of the post war immigrants. This type of settler was characterised by a voluntary return movement but before they retired they would make arrangements to be replaced by a younger kinsmen. The result here was that these migrants returned home to their areas of origin with substantial savings which produced a consistent migration pattern of fellow kinsmen and villagers both at home and abroad. (Dahya: 25).

Pakistanis themselves confirm that their primary motive for the migration was economic. Single and married men left their wives and children in Pakistan to come to Britain in order to save money that would benefit their immediate kin at home. Wages for labouring jobs in Britain in the early 1960's were over 30 times those offered for similar jobs in Pakistan (Shaw, 1998: 9). Ballard writes that from the early 1950's until the end of the 1970's, the British economy was acutely short of labour, hence migrant workers began to be drawn in from much further a field (Ballard, 1996:6).

It has been pointed out that because the social and emotional costs of migration were so great, why then did so many settlers come to Britain in the first place? Many would point to financial rewards when in fact Ballard points out that this was not necessarily the case. Migration was above all an entrepreneurial activity; here success was dependent on making substantial initial investment. Overseas migrants were therefore drawn from families of middling status, whose members were neither sufficiently prosperous nor so poor as to be unable to afford the migrant's ticket, passport and visa. Migration to Britain therefore was in no way a means of escaping destitution. Most urbanites saw the move as a step towards career advancement. Employment overseas was more usually the means of supplementing the family's capital resources. Hence the initial objective of most South Asian migrants, especially the peasant farmers, was to raise their family's standing in the local social hierarchy (Ballard, 1996:10).

Another important characteristic of South Asian migration is 'chain migration'. Ballard explains how this characteristic turned the early south asian migrant from a sojourner to a settler. The vast majority of migrants arrived not as unconnected individuals, but in cascading chains along paths of kinship and friendship. Even though the primary aim was to earn and save as much money as possible before returning home, the majority did not envision they would stay on to what would become a permanent basis in Britain. Ballard explains that many started to enjoy the financial autonomy Britain offered them and their new roles as wealth producers for their extended families. From the 1960's onwards the cost of air travel fell sharply, thus making visits back home much easier. This allowed migrants to reunite with their families, oversee the investment of their savings and savour the fruits of their labour. With cheap airfare they could easily return to Britain and start the process of saving once again. Gradually without their intention the sojourner soon became a permanent settler (Ballard, 1996: 12).

The 1950's and 60's saw the process of chain migration creating large South Asian communities within Britain. Each industrial city into which Britain had drawn in workers for the labour market became places of settlement of the South Asian worker migrant and his extended family and kinsmen. From 1964 a major change in Pakistani settlement took place as wives, children and young brides began to join their men already settled in places such as Oxford and Bradford (Shaw, 1998: 45). The arrival here of women and children made easier the dilemma of the migrant who now had his family and kin with him bringing with them culture and values from the homeland.

A] Legal issues arising towards the Pakistani community in terms of the formulation of specific immigration laws targeting this group

Migration was welcomed very early on by Britain, where economic benefits could be gained, but chain migration brought a huge concern in the 1950's and 60's, here the threat of mass migration with populated areas of Asians and Africans making their homes became a huge dilemma that Britain had to control.

Before 1962, Pakistanis were British subjects (under the 1948 British Nationality Act) and could enter Britain without restriction. When news travelled as to the immigration controls just before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 was passed there was a dramatic increase in the rate of immigration. Fifty thousand people entered Britain in the 18 months before the 1962 Act was in force compared with the 17,000 who entered between 1955 and 1960 (Shaw, 1998: 25). The threat of Britain's immigration controls also coincided with a change in the Pakistani Government's policy on immigration. In 1960 the Pakistani Government had decided to build a dam at Mangla which would submerge some 250 villages in the Mirpur district. In 1961, when the 1962 Act was imminent, it withdrew restrictions on immigration and promoted the migration of 5,000 people in a move to compensate Mirpuri villagers who had been dispossessed of land by the construction of the dam (Shaw, 1998: 25).

The threat of controls influenced many men to migrate who may not otherwise have done but as Shaw points out, this did not alter the fact that most migrants came to Britain essentially to earn money for their social advancement and in most cases they had contacts already in Britain (Shaw, 1998: 25). These migrants were drawn from a wider range of districts and class and caste categories than the first phase of migration and many of these settled into Oxford. Therefore the general effect of the post-1962 restrictions on immigration was to reinforce the pattern of migration from particular areas, villages and kinship groups within villages that had already been established before the controls.

After the 1962 controls had been enforced, a different type of migrant became apparent. These were urban-origin men from white-collar occupations and some college students who applied for vouchers on the encouragement of friends and family. Despite this new category of migrants, the pattern of immigration from particular areas did not alter drastically. This was mainly due to the fact that a man's emigration depended on prior contacts in Britain and because the controls themselves institutionalised a preference for certain types of people. This was done by way of three categories of work vouchers. The first two categories were available for people with specific jobs to come to and for people who had specific skills and qualifications. The third category was for those with no definite prospects of employment. Within the last group preference was given to men who had served in the armed forces during the Second World War (Shaw, 1998: 26).

This was to soon change in the 1970's; migrant communities became seen as the 'enemy within' (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 15). Ethnic minorities were branded as scroungers and the threat of overcrowding was becoming a graver concern. New right philosophers argued that the new ethnic minorities were not just foreigners but hostile aliens, representing a threat to national unity and integrity. Such hostile and racist views were inevitable against the backdrop of 'Paki-bashing' in the 1970's. This had become a national sport among racially motivated individuals. This was all to affect the process of early migration with restrictions on further immigration. In 1967 Enoch Powell openly advocated a policy of repatriation where he argued not for migrants' families to be reunited in Britain but rather that migrants should be returned home and reunited with families over there (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 16).

In 1969 further immigration restrictions by the Home Secretary James Callaghan were introduced, aimed particularly at husbands and fiancés. The rule was that an entry clearance certificate was necessary for a husband to gain rights to join a woman already settled in Britain. In 1971 the Conservative party came into power with a promise to curtail black and Asian immigration. The 1962 and 1968 Acts were proving to be incapable of controlling the influx of migrants and Parliament finally enacted the Immigration Act, 1971 to introduce stricter rules (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 17).

According to the 1971 Act, migration for work would now be possible only through a work permit, valid for twelve months. This law applying to 'aliens' was now also applicable to citizens of Commonwealth countries. Here the concept of patriality applied whereby Commonwealth citizens with a grandparent born in the UK were entitled to have the right of abode in the UK. Jones and Wellhengama refer to this as the 'grandparent clause' which tended to help white individuals living in former colonies and discriminated indirectly against non-whites being that many Asians and Blacks could not produce a grandparent born in the UK.

In 1975, Margaret Thatcher entered the immigration debate where she described new migrants as 'dole cheaters' and 'undesirable elements' (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 17). This was the same rhetoric of Enoch Powell which had seemed to have gained new ideological ground in social and political discourses. The uprisings in Liverpool and Brixton were a reaction to Britain's racism and instead of identifying and addressing the real factors for the escalation of inner city disturbances, politicians resurrected anti-immigration arguments. Thus the improvement of race relations was linked to restrictions on immigration (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 19).

The British Nationality Act, 1981 came into force in 1983. This Act effectively excluded British Overseas Citizens of Asian origin from the right of abode in the UK. Further to this, it also changed the existing law which allowed those born in the UK to claim British citizenship under the *ius soli* principle, irrespective of the parents' citizenship. The 1981 Act therefore aimed to deprive the children of ethnic minorities of British citizenship unless one parent held British citizenship at the material time whereas before British born children could not be deported. Visa requirements were further imposed in 1985 on citizens of South Asia, including Pakistan.

The immigration Act, 1988 amended the 1971 Act further by specific rules targeted at Asian migrants. During the

1990's, restrictions on asylum seekers became most prominent. The most recent immigration law affecting Pakistani migrants as well as other Asian and African migrants is the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996, which came into force in July 1996 (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 20).

## B] Defining this group as an ethnic minority

The 1950's saw Black and Asian civil rights movements campaigning against racism and discrimination. The 1960's responded with the Race Relations Act, 1965 and 1976, which remains the current law. Thus it became an important task for Asians and Africans to be defined as ethnic groups so they would be recognised and protected by the law from further racism and discrimination (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 27).

The view that ethnicity is only about race was a prominent one in the early 19th century where 'race' specified the outward appearances of specific human groups. It was assumed that no one can change such a group identity which is governed by natural and biological factors (Cashmore, 1984: 214). The term started to be used synonymously with 'nation' before and after the First World War and then the misuse of the term by the Nazis saw the decline of its use and with the debates on 'new minorities' the term 'race' was widely replaced with the term 'ethnic' which includes cultural and historical factors as well as biological ones (Capotorti, 1967: 34).

In the early 80's, the Court of Appeal took the approach that ethnicity is about race in the *Mandla v Lee* case. Then the same case in the House of Lords on retrospection ruled that ethnicity is not only about race thus demanding a wider definition to include a groups who shares a long history, has a culture tradition of its own, a common geography, a common language, literature, religion and is a minority group or has been subject to oppression (*Mandla v Lee*, 1983). However this decision gave only Sikhs and Jews recognition and protection of the Race Relations Act.

Defining ethnicity carries with it notions of language, culture, religion, nationality and a shared heritage. Ethnicity has also been embraced as a political symbol whereby it serves as a mode of identity of belonging and political mobilisation (Werbner in Abbas, 1990: 216). But the difficulties of identity remain prominent in that ethnic minorities find it increasingly problematic in attaching a 'British' identity to themselves and at the same time the government can be seen as holding a narrow and exclusive definition of what they term as being 'British'.

Many of the early Pakistani migrants to Britain have been the most reluctant to attach a British identity to themselves. The main reason for this attitude stems from their history with colonial Britain, where attaching a British identity would ultimately mean accepting to be subjects of the British. With the effects of globalisation, Pakistani's are also worried about losing their traditions, customs and values and hence hold onto the security of their close knit society with a hesitance in accepting anything 'British' (Jacobson, 1997, 185). Further to this, by emphasising that Britishness comprises common biological roots, a common language and an allegiance to the Crown; parliamentarians have easily excluded certain migrants. Such narrow views of being 'British' still prevail and hence do not make the integration of Pakistanis into British society any easier (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 31).

Amongst South Asians, the Muslims identify themselves predominantly as a religious group, who are apart of the world-wide Muslim community (ummah). This religious identification has been a stumbling block to recognition as a 'racial group' under the 1976 Act, in addition to their internal diversity. It has been argued that Muslims have no unified culture. However Muslims argue that they are bound together by shared historical links of their religion, Arabic language and nurtured geography where Mecca has become their shared link. It appears as clear discrimination that Muslims are not recognised as a religious group when Jews are recognised. The response of such unfair and unjust legislation has been the vigorous calls for reform and the removal of unfair discrimination against Muslims by the English legal system (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 53-55).

The Pashtun tribe of North West Frontier Province have also demanded to be recognised as a distinct ethnic minority sub group. In the case of Abdul Khayum, it was found that Pashtun's have a long shared history, their own cultural traditions, the Pushto language and literature, poetry, song and live in a separate geographical area and have a separate legal system supervised by elders. However the tribunal preferred to decide that Pashtun's followed Islam as like the Punjabi's and therefore could only be considered as a religious group (Jones and Wellhengama, 2000: 56). It is clear to see that the liberal decision in the *Mandla* case has not been followed as a precedent, making it applicable to Pakistani Muslims and Pashtun Pakistani's. The House of Lords in that case has not been as inclusive and welcoming as it first appeared.

It is also important to look at how Britain's Pakistanis identify themselves. Many second generation Pakistani's identify with being 'British' as well as being 'Pakistani' or 'Muslim'. This generation are also ready to challenge the racialised constructions of Britishness in contrast to their parents' generation (Abbas, 2005: 217). 'Britishness' is being redefined by young Pakistanis themselves.

Therefore it has become clear that Britain's ethnic minorities are demanding not only to be recognised as an

ethnic group in terms of religion and sub groups within the Race Relations Act, 1976 but they are also demanding a wider working definition of the term 'Britishness'. This means that ethnic, cultural and religious distinctions between groups should be recognised and addressed as compatible within the British identity. Instead of addressing the pressing issues of ghettos with a program of assimilation which proves discriminatory to ethnic groups, rather focus should be on allowing two different cultures to co-exist, without one claiming dominance over the other.

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