

# Pakistani community in Britain sociology essay



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Ali (1982) Pakistani's main concentration is in U. K. where they began in the early 20th century as sailors in the Merchant Navy and soldiers in the British army. They had an opportunity to migrate in large numbers following the economic expansion and shortage of labour resulting from the two world wars. However, their migration did not have a set pattern up until the last half of the 1950s. (p. 5-7)

Post world war two migration to Britain from the Asian subcontinent was based on imperial ties and largely driven by economic imperatives.

Rebuilding post war economy entailed a demand for labour that could not be satisfied by the British population itself. After 1945, virtually all countries in Western Europe began to attract significant numbers of workers from abroad and by the late 1960s they mostly came from developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Middle East (Massey, D. et. al , 1993, p. 431).

Islam in the UK has a South Asian character. The largest number of Muslims originates from Pakistan (Samad & Sen, p. 43). Further to this, the largest group of Muslims from the Indian subcontinent have come from Pakistan, both West and East (Ibid.) In Pakistan, major impetuses to emigrate came from the poorer agricultural areas of the Mirpuri district in southern Kashmir and the Cambellpur district of the north-eastern Punjab. Smaller numbers left from the North-west Frontier Province next to the Afghani border. In the case of Mirpur, a further factor was the disruption caused by the Mangla Dam project which started in 1960, and was ultimately to flood about 250 villages. In East Pakistan, which was later to become Bangladesh, the two main sources of immigration were in the Sylhet district in the north-east and the maritime region around Chittagong. Due to the struggles of a newly

developed state and poverty, many Pakistanis took the opportunity to come and work in Britain. (Neilsen, 2004, p. 41)

Before 1962, Pakistanis were British subjects (under the 1948 British Nationality Act) and could enter Britain without restriction. There was a dramatic increase in the rate of immigration just before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962<sup>[1]</sup> was passed. Before the act of 1962 was passed about fifty thousand people entered Britain within 18 months, in comparison 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 1961, when the 1962 Commonwealth Act was imminent, Pakistani government 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).

Until the beginning of the 1960s, entry into the UK by the citizens of British colonies and member countries of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, introduced restrictions on immigration to the UK. Although it was intended to discourage Pakistanis and people from Commonwealth countries from migrating to the country, it turned out to have the opposite effect. The 'unintended effect' of the 1971 Immigration Act<sup>[2]</sup> was that a significant number of Pakistanis and from the other countries entered the UK to 'beat the ban' (Shaw, 1994, as quoted in Samad & Sen, 2007, p. 28). 1970s family reunification marked a turning point for the establishment of Islam in Europe. Along with emergence of 'community through family reunification, some of

the conventional norms rooted in social relations, through the practice of Islam began to emerge (Ibid., p. 38)

These labour migrants despite their social origins and qualification levels were largely confined to low-paid manual work and faces racial discrimination when being recruited for jobs (Modood, 2005, p. 60). In the 1970s Ethnic minorities were branded as scroungers and the threat of overcrowding was becoming a grave concern. Enoch Powell, in 1967, 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). Further to this, by emphasising that Britishness comprises common biological roots, a common language and an allegiance to the Crown; parliamentarians easily excluded certain migrants (Ibid, p. 31).

With the consequences of state led policies of migration, and arrival and settlement of a growing Pakistani community, emerged socio-economic problems that this new community had to face. The next part of the essay will discuss the various ways in which the British Pakistanis are disadvantaged and ways in which they responded to the underlying and changing political, social and economic conditions in Britain. While the disadvantage of Pakistanis actually predates the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice, the latter threatens to exacerbate the former and to prevent the formation of goodwill required to act against the chronic disadvantage of Pakistanis in Britain. (Modood, 2005, p. 80)

As the Labour force survey (Spring, 2000 as quoted in Saman & Sen, p. 45) illustrates, Pakistanis are two and a half times more likely than the white population to be unemployed and nearly three times more likely to be in low-paid jobs. According to Cessari (p. 58) the socio-economic marginality of Pakistanis is most often accompanied by residential segregation. She argues that the data from the British census show that Pakistani immigrants tend to live in the most dilapidated or unhealthy housing conditions.

Chain migration processes have a strong influence on locating minorities in clusters. Hostility from the society within which the settlement takes place can reduce the ability of the group to disperse and defence may be an important element in clustering. There are both positive and negative reasons for clustering in most ethnic clustering patterns and, given their simultaneous presence in many situations, it is difficult to disentangle dominant from recessive factors. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that not all segregation results from negative factors such as white racism (Peach, 1996, p. 228)

Rex and Moore (1967) demonstrated high levels of discrimination against immigrants, particularly against Pakistanis, in their field area of Sparkbrook in Birmingham. They showed high concentrations of Pakistanis in their lowest housing class, the rooming house. Work by Dahya (1974), on the other hand, argued that Pakistani concentration in multi-occupied accommodation was a preferred, not an enforced, strategy. He argued that chain migration by village and family, the desire to maximize savings, shared language and religion, culinary needs and so forth all argued in favour of sharing

accommodation. Thus, although discrimination existed, it was not material to the patterns of concentration that arose.

Many of the early Pakistani migrants to Britain have been the most reluctant to attach a British identity to themselves. With the effects of globalisation, Pakistanis 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).

Pakistani British Muslims have been vastly influenced by cultures and customs emanating from the subcontinent, and this will continue to happen for another generation or two. The context within which they practice their religion is after all, Pakistani one: not only because they younger generation learned about Islam from their Pakistani parents but also because Pakistanis are the dominant group within the local Muslim community. They are used to hearing Urdu spoken in mosque, eating Pakistani food and wearing Pakistani clothes at religious festivals, follow Pakistani customs at weddings and other 'religious' ceremonies and abide by and rail against definitions of 'moral' behaviour which have more to do with the norms of Pakistani village life. For them the interconnections between ethnic culture and religion are dense and intricate (Jacobson, J. 2003, p. 147)

V. S. Khan (1979), writing on Mirpuris in Bradford, discusses the effect of migration on those arriving in Britain and ways in which this shapes their socio-cultural behavior. He maintains that the very means of coping with migration could lead to inherent stresses, in that the knowledge of traditional culture in the homeland, constant evaluation through the process of

migration to Britain and prior expectations have a direct effect on the migrant's life-style and values. " The stressful experience of migration is also...a crucial determinant of a migrant's perception of his situation, and the actual options open to him. While many of the supportive institutions of village life buffer confrontation with the new and alien world in Britain, in the long term they not only restrict access to it, but also hinder the attainment of things valued..." (Ibid. p. 55)

Werbner discusses similar factors:

"... the social stresses experienced by Pakistani migrants in Britain ' derive from

three main 'arenas'; the traditional culture and emigration area; the migration

process; and settlement in the new environment and society" (1990: 37).

Her analysis however, presents a more positive view of the adaptability of Pakistanis to new circumstances, in particular to those concerning women, and regarding the expansion of kinship networks to inculcate friends and members of other sub-castes. (Imtiaz, 1997, p. 36)

Significance of Bradford:

The Bradford Metropolitan District is situated west of Leeds; north of the trans- Pennine highway. To the north and east lies North Yorkshire, with its manor houses, farms and cathedral cities, while to the west and north lies the Lake District.

The city has been the centre of the wool trade since the 18th century and, until recently, wool dominated the local economy. Even the engineering and chemical industries were associated with the wool trade by supplying the needs of the textile industry. Throughout the 19th century it was mainly a working class city structured around a low wage economy. The global networks, stretching out to the colonies, in particular, were constructed around importing wool and reprocessing it for export. These networks persisted into the mid-twentieth century (Samad & Eade, Community Liaison Unit)

Although Pakistani Muslims settled in various parts of the United Kingdom, Bradford still has one of the highest concentrations of Pakistani Muslims in the country (and more than any other Yorkshire and Humber region) (Din, 2006). Bradford is one of many towns and cities that have ethnically diverse populations in terms of religion as well such places as Tower Hamlets, Birmingham and Slough (National Census, 2001). The Bradford area also has one of the highest numbers of individuals who were born outside the European Union (National Census, 2001).

The majority of Muslims in Bradford have roots in rural areas, with a large majority of Pakistanis from Mirpur in Azad Kashmir, a mountainous region and one of the least northern areas of Pakistan. This Pakistani community has a growing underclass with a significant section of young men under achieving in schools. They are generally characterised by low educational qualifications and occupational concentrations in restaurants and taxi driving. Along with low participation of women in the formal labour market and marriage at an early age, fewer years of education, lower educational <https://assignbuster.com/pakistani-community-in-britain-sociology-essay/>



skills and large average family and household size contributes to multiple deprivations (Lewis, 2007).

Bradford has a rich religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. With a range of ethnic communities, it is predominantly Muslim (16.1 per cent) and largely of 'Pakistani' origin with 14.5 per cent of the total population of the city (National Statistics, 2003 as quoted in Gilligan, 2005). The Pakistani communities are very much concentrated in the inner wards of the city, where they tend to live amidst "a relatively self-contained world of businesses and institutions, religious and cultural, which they have created to service, their specific needs" (Lewis, 2002, p. 203.) Compared to other majority white communities, Bradford's Asian population is relatively young (National Statistics, 2003). They also tend to be located in areas facing relatively high levels of deprivation and disadvantage (DETR, 2000; Cattle, 2001; Denham, 2001 as quoted in Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005).

According to the Change Institute's report on the Pakistani Muslim Community in England, (2009) currently Bradford has the largest proportion of its total population (15%) identifying itself as of Pakistani origin in England. The report suggests that the latest estimates (from Bradford Metropolitan District Council) have indicated that the South Asian population has grown considerably over the last decade to 94,250, and that the people of Pakistani/Kashmiri origin number about 73,900. It further states that the South Asian population now represents about 19 per cent of the total population of Bradford and 16 per cent of Bradford's residents are Muslims, compared to the national average of 3 per cent.

Therefore, the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis (young and old) have an attachment to Bradford. For many older Pakistanis, who arrived in the late 1950s and early 60s, 'Bradford is Mirpur' is their 'home from home'. For the young generations of Pakistanis it is their home (Din, 2006)

Studies on Mirpuris:

Much of the literature on Pakistanis in Britain, particularly from the late 1970's up to the late 1980's, tends to be based on studies of communities in particular towns, such as Anwar (1979) on Rochdale, Curren (1983) on Bradford, Jeffrey (1979) on Bristol, Shaw (1988) on Oxford, and Werbner (1985 & 1990) on Manchester.

A number of studies have explored the extent of 'Asian' (or Pakistani) migration and settlement across various geographical towns and cities (see Khan, 1974, 1979; Anwar, 1979; Shaw, 1988, 1994; Werbner, 1990). Some have had a particular focus on employment and housing issues (in particular Dahya, 1974; Werbner and Anwar, 1991; Anwar, 1991). Measuring the economic position of communities is easier to determine; what is more difficult is to examine the experiences and attitudes of young people towards their parents/elders; their community and the wider British society.

There is an enormous amount of published work on the early immigrants (Rose et al, 1969; Dahya, 1974; Khan 1979). Rose et al (1969) is a good starting point for cultural studies relating to the Pakistani community. Rose explored issues such as the need to recruit labour immigrants to meet the needs of the British economy and the settlement process of the early immigrants in textile cities like Bradford. In addition he explored the

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problems encountered, such as obtaining suitable accommodation, access to public services, integration and the problems of adapting to a very different way of life. The experiences of families of early settlers joining their husbands in the United Kingdom have also, to an extent, been explored. This shows close-knit family ties which exist in Pakistani families, arranged marriages, biraderi and gender inequalities in Pakistani households (Khan, 1979).

One of the earliest writers on Pakistanis in England is Dahya (1973 & 1974), who began his research in Birmingham and Bradford in 1956 and continued to publish into the 1980's. He remains amongst a hand full of researchers who have endeavoured to describe daily life amongst the single, male migrants and the control exercised over them by heads of families back in Pakistan. He clearly explained the nature of the links between the migrants in England and the social structures operating in Pakistan, based on the need for the migrant, whose family has sent him abroad in order for him to send back remittances and thus benefit not only immediate relatives but also the whole of the biraderi or kinship group. He concludes that: "... the Pakistani migrant community is in a very real sense a transitional society going through the phase of development from a rural to an urban industrial society" (1973: p, 275). Today, with the constant movement between the villages of origin of Pakistani migrants and their places of inhabitancy in Britain, paving way for a constant, rapid social and economic change in both societies, his conclusion tends to be within a situational context of a time, when both were much more separate than they are today.

Jamal (1998) carried out a research to explore food consumption experiences of the British-Pakistanis in Bradford, UK and the ways the British Pakistanis perceive their food, and their perception of English food in the UK. He identified that the first generation of British-Pakistanis perceive their own food to be traditional, tasty but oily and problematic. Various English foods are perceived by them as foreign, bland, but nonetheless, healthy. The young generation of British-Pakistanis are increasingly consuming mainstream English foods while also consuming traditional Pakistani food.

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Another study of South Asian Muslims in Bradford by Khan (2009) refutes the commonly held belief that British Muslim alienation is an entirely "Islamist" narrative. In fact, the subjects of the study are alienated not only from British society but also from the cultural traditions and values of their own families. The author of the study was struck by their disconnected individualism and described them as libertines. This clearly contradicts the stereotype of Islamists radicalised by a hatred of Western society.

Recent study by Bolnani (2007) highlights forms of 'homeland' attachment and analyses their significance among second- and third-generation British Pakistanis by comparison with the 'myth of return' that characterised the early pioneer phase of Pakistani migration to Britain. He highlights that 'Homeland attachment' for young British Pakistanis is constituted through school holidays spent in Pakistan, participation there in life-cycle rituals involving the wider kinship network, and the older generation's promotion of the idea of Pakistan as a spiritual and cultural homeland. It further suggests that, for the pioneer generation, the 'myth of return' justified a socio-economically motivated migration. He further argues that for the second and third generations, the 'homeland' attachments and the idea of a possible return to

Pakistan is a response to contemporary political tensions and Islamophobia. Therefore, he concludes that while 'myth of return' still remains, for the majority, that myth has been revitalised and has a new political significance in the contemporary political context of British Pakistanis.

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#### Marriages:

The governing principle of marital choice in any community is homogamy - the selection of a partner from a similar social background shaped, for example, by race, class, ethnicity, religion, age and education, thus those who do not conform to these norms, in some circumstances, suffer sanctions, ranging from disapproval to ostracism (Bradford Commission Report 1996).

For Pakistanis, the life-cycle with weddings, births and funerals is particularly lived in a shared way by the family extended and split over two continents, Europe and Asia. Adults make return trips for various reasons, but most centrally to arrange or perform a child's marriage (Ballard 1987, p. 21; Shaw 2001, p. 319-325).

Among British Pakistanis marriage is not only within the same ethnic group, but consanguineous-arranged with relatives-according to clan as well as caste systems. In a complex context of ethnicity and caste, marriage is often seen as the chosen mechanism to consolidate biradari[3] loyalties.

Furthermore, due to chain migration, stronger village and kin networks were

created, that were later reinforced by transnational arranged marriages, often with cousins from the same area or village.

Pakistanis, like many other groups, consider it an important parental responsibility to find spouses for their children. They prefer to select someone they know well, to be sure that he or she has the qualities they appreciate and will make a caring partner. However, Khan (1977) argues in his research that ethnic minorities such as Pakistanis, face two problems namely the limited availability of suitable persons in the restricted local community, and another the fact that their circle of acquaintance in the country of origin tends to shrink within the limits of the extended family. Therefore, for groups with a tradition of consanguineous marriage, it is only natural for the choice of partner to fall progressively closer within the family circle. This argument is supported by Rao & Inbaraj (1979) who give evidence to support this view from South India, arguing that for South Asians monogamous, close consanguineous marriage has been practised for thousands of years.

Moreover, Bano (1991) discussed the upward social mobility through the institution of marriage amongst British Pakistanis, which she sees as being marked in the Netherlands in comparison to Pakistan. She described the practice of cousin marriages explaining their common prevalence amongst relatively wealthy, rural, as well as landowning families. She then discusses “the extension of cousin marriage” (Ibid. p. 15), proposing that it could include partners being chosen from distant family, or from the same religious tendency, or from the parents’ close business contacts.

According to a research conducted by Overall and Nichols (2001), the U. K. Asian population, particularly within the Pakistani communities, tends to have high levels of consanguineous unions which are correlated with high rates of morbidity and mortality (Darr and Modell 1988; Terry et al. 1985; Bunday et al. 1991 as quoted in Overall & Nickols, 2001). It is not unusual to observe a proportion of first-cousin marriages of around 50% (Darr and Modell 1988).

Modood et al. argue that the Asian older generation prefers marriages to be arranged by families within the clan or extended family and that 'love marriages' were not the most appropriate way of finding a life-partner. The most frequent argument supporting this view was that love marriages are equated with high levels of divorce. Arranged marriages are seen as diminishing the likelihood of divorce because the partners are chosen for their compatibility and suitable family backgrounds (Modood et al. 1997).

According to most researchers there is a continuing prevalence for high rates of intercontinental and intra-caste marriages (over 50%) between British Pakistani spouses and brides or grooms in Pakistan (Charsley, 2003; Shaw, 2001). It is suggested that the pressure for such marriages is apparently exerted by close relatives in Pakistan who use marriage as a route for their children to migrate legally to Britain. According to recent research, however, the spouses marrying into Britain often suffer isolation, and have poor employment prospects (Charsley, 2003). Furthermore, most Pakistani children are compliant and agree, however reluctantly, to cousin and intercontinental marriages (Jacobson, 1998). The Home Office statistics show an influx of 15, 000 prospective marriage partners (male and female) from <https://assignbuster.com/pakistani-community-in-britain-sociology-essay/>



the Indian sub-continent arriving in Britain in 2001 alone, the vast majority arranged by parents for their British-born children (Werbner, 2005). Charsley (2003) reports that, in 2000, there were 10, 000 people both men and women, who married into Britain. Werbner (2005) explains this phenomenon by arguing that Islam permits marriage with a wide range of close kin and affines, and according to recent researches, the majority of Pakistani marriages continue to take place within the biradari; " a local agnatic lineage and, more widely, an ego-focused kindred of traceable affines and consanguineous kin". She argues that this notion of biradari helps mediate between kinship, locality and zat (caste), and that such biradaris are ranked and reflect class and caste status in the Pakistani society (Werbner, 2005).

Darr and Modell (1988) conducted a research that carried inculcated an enquiry answered by 100 randomly selected British Pakistani mothers in the postnatal wards of two hospitals in West Yorkshire, Bradford, showed that 55 were married to their first cousins, while only 33 cases had individuals whether their mother had been married to her first cousin. Darr and Modell argued that there results indicated an increasing rate of consanguineous marriage in the relatively small group studied, contrasting with the decreasing rate which was observed in some other countries. They had enquired 900 women in hospitals in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1983 showing 36% first cousin marriages, 4% first cousin once removed, 8% second cousin, and 53% unrelated (of which 25% were in the Biraderi (same kinship). These figures are almost identical with those reported in Britain for the grand parental generation (who were married while they were in Pakistan), and

supported their conclusion that the frequency of close consanguineous marriage was increasing among British Pakistanis (p. 189).

According to another research by Modell (1991) both in Pakistan and the UK about 75% of marriages are between relatives, but the frequency of closely consanguineous marriage has increased with migration, about 55% of couples of reproductive age in England being married to a first cousin. In many cases the relationship is closer than first cousins because of previous consanguineous marriages in the family. The proportion of cousin marriages is likely to fall but the absolute number will increase, at least for the next generation, because the population is growing.

According to the results of a study by Alam & Husband (2006), Muslims comprise the UK's largest religious minority, and are the object of analysis and concern within various policy arenas and popular debates, including immigration, marriage and partner selection, social cohesion and integration. Their research analysed experiences and narratives from 25 men aged 16 to 38, their accounts shedding light on what it means to be a Bradfordian of Pakistani and Muslim heritage. It also highlighted the policy context surrounding the men's attitudes toward various facets of their lives, including marriage, family, work, the city in general, and the neighbourhood in which they lived. Alam & Husband concluded that although there were some generational continuity of cultural values and norms, several significant changes were also simultaneously taking place.

Shaw (2001) began his study by supposing that in the 1990s, forty years after Pakistani migration to Britain began, the rate of consanguineous

marriage among British Pakistanis would show signs of decline, as the urbanized and British-educated descendants of pioneer immigrants adopt the values of many contemporary Westerners and reject arranged marriages. However, on the contrary based on the statistical data he gathered, he saw that Pakistani marriage patterns showed no such clear trend, and instead there was some evidence that, within certain groups of British Pakistanis, the rate of first-cousin marriage had increased rather than declined. The study offered an analysis and interpretation of a high rate of marriage to relatives, especially first cousins, in a sample of second-generation British Pakistanis. It argued that the high rate of such marriage is not a simple reflection of a cultural preference. The research also underlines the inadequacy of a blanket category 'Pakistani' in relation to marriage patterns and choices. Shaw suggested that certain variations in region of origin, caste, socio-economic status, and upbringing must be considered in analysis in order to reveal the processes that have generated this pattern and allowed it to persist.

Simpson (1997) claims that in Bradford 50 per cent of marriages are trans-continental, i. e. the partner sare from Pakistan. He has proposed two reasons that help explain the reasons for choosing partners from outside Britain, and has analysed the ways these reasons operate independently or may reinforce each other. Firstly, there is a cultural preference for consanguinity, usually marriage to a cousin, which is prevalent among the Pakistani community. As Sarah Bunday et al. (1990) showed in her research that 69 per cent of Birmingham Pakistani marriages are consanguineous and it is expected that if current researchers were carried out they will show

similar levels in Bradford, considerably higher than in Pakistan itself.

Simpson (1997) further argues that since emigration from Pakistan to Britain is usually seen as a positive achievement, marriage also functions specifically to fulfil a commitment to improve the family fortunes. He gives the second reason that many Muslim young people in Bradford express a cultural preference for partners with traditional values and that sentiment is echoed by their parents who then arrange or help to arrange their marriage partners from Pakistan. Simpson nevertheless points out that, this trend should not be seen as simply a preference for subservient wives albeit this may be true for some. He further points out that there is qualitative evidence that some young Muslim women see men with traditional values from Pakistan as providing a more secure family future than the more liberal friends with whom they have grown up in Bradford. This Simpson points out may coincide both with the strong Muslim and the strong Pakistani identities that are noted among Bradford young women, based on researches by Kim Knott and Sajda Khokher (1993) and by Kauser Mirza (1989).

Modood and Berthoud (1997) carried out a research to show that among ethnic minority groups 20 per cent of African-Caribbeans