Here to Stay

Bradford's South Asian Communities

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Diversity

1. Not all people who originate from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, and those with brown skin who are from the East African countries, Kenya and Uganda, can be put into the one category of "Asians".
2. There are not one homogeneous group: Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are separate communities in themselves.
3. Cultural, linguistic, religious and regional diversity is very significant.
4. To categorise on the basis of nationality is misleading: some have British nationality, some have retained their original nationality; and Pakistanis may have dual nationality.

Identity

5. Asians identify themselves as Punjabis, Gujaratis, Mirpuris, Pathans and Bengalis, in accordance with their region of origin.
6. They are Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims. A Muslim could be an Indian, a Pakistani or a Bengali: a Hindu could be from the Punjab or Gujarat.

Language

7. The Bradford Schools Language Survey (1987) recorded 20,000 bilingual children: 80% spoke Punjabi, 6.2% spoke Gujarati, 5.4% spoke Bengali and 3.3% spoke Pushto.
8. Hindi, the national language of India, was spoken by only 0.7% of Hindu children.
9. Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, is used for written communication even if Punjabi or Pushto is spoken in the home.
10. Sikhs use Punjabi both for written and verbal communication.
11. Gujarati and Hindi are used by Hindus for written communication, depending on their area of origin.

Cultural Characteristics

12. People of all Asian communities share certain cultural characteristics:
    - Family izzat (honour) c
    - Biradr network of close relatives)
    - Arranged marriage
    - Modesty

    These are complex cultural notions closely connected to attitudes and social behaviour.
13. The biradri of a person in Britain may include close friends from the same village, but traditionally it would only be relatives and people from the same sub-caste.
14. Traditionally, for women to mix freely with men was considered immodest, but in Britain this is more common and more acceptable.
15. Asians have similar diets, styles of clothing, and respect for older people in the community and the family.
16. Religions, languages and cultural characteristics cut across national identities.

Immigration

History

17. Bradford has received immigrants throughout history; the latest phase being the immigration of West Indians and Asians (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians) from the early 1950s onwards. Immigrants also came from Ireland and Germany before the Second World War; Poles Ukrainians and Italians came in the 1940s.
18. Unique characteristics to the Asian immigration are the size of the group, the colour of their skin, and their distinctive religious, social and cultural value systems.
19. Asians came to Bradford largely to work in textiles, an industry in which there was spare capacity and a need for cheap labour.
20. Asians met the requirements of cheap, low-skilled labour willing to work shifts, long hours and at weekends. Some Asians found work in foundries or on the buses where working conditions were similar.

Reasons for emigration

21. The most commonly recognised explanations for emigration are:
    - High levels of unemployment
    - Over-dependence on the land
    - Poverty and poor lifestyles; and
    - Religious or political persecution
22. Previous literature on post-war Asian immigration has over-stressed the "push" factors. Although high unemployment, poverty and pressure on land existed, it varied for individual groups, and an examination of the economies of emigrating areas suggests that they did not emigrate simply because of desperation and poverty. Some non-economic considerations were equally important.
23. There is an old tradition of emigration from areas such as Punjab, Gujarat, Mirpur and Sylhet; people growing up in such "emigration cultures" often compete with one another.
24. Sending people away from home is an indicator of economic success and a source of social pride for families within their communities.
25. Although this is not recognised in the literature on Asian immigration, it is an important factor in the oral history.

Opposition to the "chain migration" from immigrants

26. The role of pioneer immigrants in the emigration process was paradoxical: they worked very hard, lived and worked in very poor conditions and suffered human indignities.
27. This was either kept from their families, or their families (who were still potential emigrants) refused to believe it. They looked only at how much the immigrant earned and dismissed their tales of misery as a ploy to discourage other emigrants. This discouragement was interpreted as jealousy and revealed an intention on the part of the immigrants to keep up their high social and economic status by stopping others from joining them.
28. However, a large number of Asian people came as part of a "chain migration" phenomenon; that is, to join their families.

Emigration Pattern

29. First to arrive in the late 1950s in Bradford were the Hindus and Sikhs.
30. The Pakistan Muslims started coming in significant numbers leading up to the early 1960s, prior to the enforcement of the 1962 Immigration Act which required an employment voucher for entry into Britain.
31. Their number grew fast and a sizeable community was established very rapidly.
32. Initially Asian migrants were male and young, in their twenties. They saw themselves as transients rather than settlers, intending to earn as much as they could then return home.
33. Hindus and Sikhs then changed their minds and sent for their families in the mid 60's; by the mid '70s most (including all Sikhs) were living as complete family units.
34. Their reasons for this change were:
    - Better standard of general education
    - Fluency in English
    - Children would receive a western education
    - Diminishing chances to gain good jobs on their return home
    - Taste for western lifestyle and comforts.
35. Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants delayed their decision to bring over their dependants because of their
    - relatively lower standard of education
    - stronger commitments to their joint families at home; and
    - stronger religious attitudes
    - wish to avoid exposing their women and children to more liberal western value systems.
36. The tighter immigration laws of the 1960s affected the rights of dependants of migrants to enter Britain, resulting in the immigrants bringing their families over quicker than they intended.

Settlement Pattern

37. According to the 1991 Census, almost two-thirds of the population of Asian origin are settled in four wards of the inner-city area.
38. Of the total population of University Ward and Bradford Moor ward, 68.4% and 49.5% respectively are of Asian origin. Almost one-third of the population of Toiler and Lower Horton wards are Asians.
39. The Asian population is concentrated heavily in a very small area, and these people live in very close proximity to each other.
40. People from the same districts in their home countries have settled close to each other:
    - Indian Sikhs live in Bradford Moor, Bolton and Toiler Wards
    - Gujarati Hindus live in Great Horton, Little Horton and University Wards
    - Pakistani Muslims are concentrated in University, Toiler and Bradford Moor Wards but as there are large numbers of them they also live in other inner-city areas.
    - The Bangladeshi community is confined to a small area in Undercliffe Ward.
41. This is a consequence of two factors:
    - Their preference to preserve their cultural identity
    - Their preference for cheap housing accommodation near their workplace
42. Cultural identity is more easily preserved by living in close proximity to people who practise the same customs, have the same or similar religious beliefs and speak the same language.

43. The process of chain migration also contributed to the development of this pattern of settlement.

Choice of residential area

44. Constraints on housing choice were not just their own preferences but also discriminatory practices of the indigenous white population and of the money-lending practices.

45. The indigenous white population was reluctant to share the good residential areas with Asians and reacted with hostility to their presence. This had the effect of pushing the Asians into certain areas less favoured by the white population.

46. Owner-occupancy among all Asian communities is very high, as in the early years they were often able to buy cheap hosing through personal savings or generous interest-free loans from relatives and friends. Traditional banks and building societies often had policies of not giving loans on certain types of properties or in certain inner-city areas. They had strict standards on credit-worthiness which referred to the length of stay in this country. These practices denied Asians access to good housing in better residential districts.

The Asian population in Bradford

47. According to the 1991 Census, there are 62,243 people of Asian origin in Bradford:
    - They form 13.6% of the total population
    - The largest group among them is the 45,280 Pakistanis. There are also 11,713 Indians, 3.653 Bangladeshis and 1,597 other Asians.
    - Almost all the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are Muslim. The people of Indian origin are equally divided between Hindus and Sikhs
    - A very small number of Gujarati Indians are Muslim.
    - A large majority of Hindus came either directly from Gujarat or as migrants from Kenya and Uganda in the 1970s.
    - Punjabi Hindus and all the Sikhs came from the Punjab, either directly or from the East African countries.

48. The Asian population of Bradford was increasing at the rate of approximately 3,000 a year in the 1970s; the result of both immigration and natural growth.

49. The Indian birth rate declined quickly in the 1980s and the birth rates for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations have slowed down, but is likely to continue to grow at a relatively high rate because of the youthful age structure of the Asian communities.

50. Almost half the Asian population is under twenty years old.

51. Only 1% of the Asians are over the age of retirement.

52. The current composition of the population has changed the nature of problems facing the local authority; problems arising from immigration have disappeared, to be replaced by issues relating to education, housing and employment of young Asians.

Labour Market

Division of Labour

53. The labour market is divided up as follows:
    - Asians constitute 9% of the local workforce.
    - 52% of Asians of working age are economically active, compared to 82% of the local white population.

- There is significant variation between individual Asian communities: 68% of Indians, 47% of Pakistanis and 45% of Bangladeshis are economically active.
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have very low economic activity rates for women (22%) compared to Indian women (58%).
- More Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are occupied in bringing up young families, and their Muslim religion and cultural norms do not encourage women to work outside the home. Hindu and Sikh cultural and religious values put less restrictions on Indian women working.
- Although Asian women are underrepresented in the workforce, evidence suggests this is changing for the younger generation of women.
- 1993 Policy Studies Institute Report shows an economic activity rate of 57% for Indian women and 23% for Pakistani women.
- However, 34% of Pakistani women in the 16-24 age group are working as against 13% in the 45-64 age group, an increase of 250%.

Type of employment

54. The employment of Asians has changed from the time of their arrival.
    - Textiles and manufacturing industries have declined, as have opportunities in local transport.
    - Younger and better-qualified Asians seek work in service industries in the private sector; some have joined the professions and local authority services.
    - Middle-aged workers no longer in declining sectors but with some capital have become self-employed in retail, Off-licence shops, taxis, restaurants and newspaper agencies.
    - Those without skills and in middle age have become long-term unemployed.
    - According to the 1991 Census the unemployment rate for Asians in Bradford was nearly 30% compared to 9% of the white population.
    - 15% of Indians are unemployed; 36% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are unemployed.

Concentration of Asians

55. The concentration of Asian communities has had various repercussions:
    - Social infrastructure in the form of food stores, services, places of worship and social centres has developed, meeting specific needs but also intensifying the ghettoisation.
    - Asian businesses, especially small manufacturing concerns, rely heavily on female Asian labour. Their survival depends on the ethnic market they serve.
    - Deprivation and disadvantage is perpetuated by their limited access to better accommodation and situation in already poor and declining areas in the city.
    - Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim communities who have remained in the inner-city areas suffer high unemployment, underachievement in education and have a high level of dependence on state benefit.
    - Their concentration is likely to limit the number of local Asian councillors who could have any real influence on local policies.
    - However, the concentration has allowed for the election of eleven Muslim councillors, thereby giving the community a voice.
    - The current pattern of settlement does not encourage a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual society. Interaction and communication is reduced and many local whites cannot have any understanding of the social and economic deprivation that Asians suffer.
    - Ethnic concentrations provide individuals with self-esteem, identity and feelings of security.

Relations between Asian Communities

56. In cultural, religious and social terms, Asian communities are self-contained.
- Interaction between various communities is small and generally superficial.

Local organisations

- Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs share a common culture, and in earlier years would share common community centres and organisations; however they have now established separate organisations and places of worship.
- The Sikhs have five gurdwaras (Sikh temples), the first opened in 1964.
- The Punjabi Hindus have established a Hindu Cultural Society in 1968, with a Hindu Temple on Leeds Road since 1974.
- Differences in language, culture and lifestyles have always restricted closer relations between Gujarati Hindus and Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs.
- The Bharatiya Mandal (Indian Association), was founded in 1957, and the Shree Parajapati Association was established in 1975, both Gujarati organisations.

Outside events

- Events in South Asian temporarily influence relations between these communities; for example, during the Indo-Pakistani conflicts of 1965 and 1971, Gujarati and Hindu-Sikh Punjabi communities became closer.
- The events in the Punjab since 1984 (the army attack on the Golden Temple, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the mass killing of Sikhs in Delhi) pushed Hindu and Sikh communities apart for several years.
- Persecution of Sikhs and Hindus by Muslim rulers in the 15th and 16th centuries in India still rankles today, a feeling heightened by the partition of the Punjab in 1947.
- The demolition of Baabri Mosque in Ayodhyia in 1992 by militant Hindus created tension between Hindu and Muslim populations in Bradford, resulting in acts of vandalism and arson against Hindu temples and businesses.
- The ongoing "Kashmir Issue" creates tension between Indians and people from Azad Kashmir in Bradford from time to time.

Joint organisations

- Social mixing between individual members is common, but closer communal co-operation is selective and infrequent.
- The umbrella organisations of each community, The Bradford Council of Mosques (founded in 1981), The Federation of Bradford Sikh Organisations (1984), and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1985) meet together on occasions as the Joint Committee of South Asian Organisations, established in 1986. Its members discuss issues relevant to all three communities and seek to provide a joint front in dealing with issues affecting all Asians.

Fragmentation

- Asians in Bradford, as elsewhere in Britain, are culturally, linguistically, religiously and politically fragmented. They have a large number of organisations and are rarely united on any issue. They are fully conscious of their caste, class and religious divisions and as such, although they wish for solidarity, they realise it is an unachievable objective.

Culture and Change

57. It is a common misconception that the British Asian communities have static cultures. An outsider's view is that any change is towards more traditionalism and 'militancy'.

The family

- An Asian family is generally believed to be a three-generational joint family, although there is ample evidence that this is not the case. Any jointness is in terms of mutual love and respect, and in social obligations and responsibilities to family in home countries.
- The term 'horizontally extended family' is more appropriate in Bradford: generally the married children (without their own children) stay with parents before establishing their own home; married brother may also share accommodation.
- It is not uncommon for unmarried siblings to live with their married brothers.
- Mutual contact is regular and intimate, even when not living together or close *by.*
- Nationally, 80% of Asian families are nuclear families; this pattern is highest among Hindus and lowest among Muslims.
- Bradford's Asian population is predominantly Muslim, therefore a higher proportion will be extended families.

Cultural changes

- South Asians are aware of the many gradual but important changes within the family unit, some of which are viewed negatively.
- These changes relate to traditional male and female roles; respect for and authority of parents and older family members; duties towards parents and the lack of sanctions which can be applied to deviants.
- More women work outside the home and expect men to share the domestic duties and take a more active role in looking after children.
- Children question their parents' attitudes towards many aspects of the modern life, and seek increasing independence over decisions affecting their life.
- The culture and norms of first-generation migrants are virtually unchanged, but second- and third-generation Asians are developing a hybrid culture mixing both Asian and western traditions. They are modifying traditions of respect, izzat, family, biradri, modesty and so on.
- This process of change causes concern for parents and their children, but they are seeking compromise and handling conflicts with care. The traditional Asian family is not in crisis; change is occurring in various degrees, differing from one group to another.
- Sikhs and Hindus have changed faster and more significantly than Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- Hindu and Sikh women appear to be more emancipated than Muslim women.
- The regional, class and urban background of families prior to emigration causes wide variations within each community, which are now likely to disappear as the environment of the younger generation outside the family and close community is becoming more similar.

Position of women

- According to Amrit Wilson, despite the differences in lifestyle, areas of origin and religious beliefs, Asian women suffer from oppression as women in a male-dominated Asian society, white racism, and exploitation as a class.
- This conclusion is based on an analysis of their position in terms of western values and concepts, with little reference to the social, cultural and religious contest in which these women live their lives.
- To suggest that Muslim women in Bradford are oppressed would be a great exaggeration of the reality of the situation.
- They appear to be traditional in dress, diet, domestic responsibilities and obedience, making a limited protest about the restrictive role they are expected to play by the male members of the family.
- However it is recognised that they experience stresses, often articulated and manifested in their daily lives, arising from migration, loss of family support and its network of close relatives, and the traditional role they are expected to play in Britain.
- In Asia, a woman experiencing marital difficulties had easy access to a network of relatives and members of the biradri to help resolve these.
- Participation in social and religious functions provided women with entertainment and opportunities within a group of trusted people.
- To a non-English speaking Asian woman, the local professional support system is inaccessible. Some women's organisations have been founded and are being run by Asian women themselves, such as the Indian Women's Association, the Himmat Project, the Milan Centre and the Asian Women and Children's Centre.

Proximity of family

- The settlement pattern of Asian, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, in the city suggests that many families are living in close proximity to their relatives and to people they know before migration.
- Due to their growing familiarity with western life through education and their increasing economic independence through employment, younger Asian women have greater confidence and cope better with such stresses and strains than do the first generation.

Discrimination

58. In the earlier years of settlement the Asian groups were not fully conscious of, or concerned about, racism.
    - They were aware of the differential treatment they received in employment, housing and public places, but did not perceive this as discrimination based on race or skin colour. There are two explanations for this:
    - The first is that most of the immigrants came from families that had had no direct contact with the British in India, but had heard about the British ideals of fairness, justice and freedom of speech. Therefore they could not believe that British employers would treat them differently because of their racial origin.
    - Secondly, when they faced discrimination they tried to rationalise it in terms of personal deficiencies such as problems with communication, lack of industrial experience, unfamiliarity with local customs, or the lower standard of their educational qualifications.
    - For many years Asians were perceived as inward-looking, conservative, self-contained and low profile-keeping communities. This has now changed and

most Asians are conscious of the all-embracing nature of racial discrimination in the local community and in British Society at large.

- Asians are now articulating their issues more effectively and demonstrate their determination to fight against discrimination.
- Asians have been working on the buses as platform staff since the 1950s, but the first Asian inspector was not appointed until 1979.

Education

59. Education has been the main field of the Asian communities' struggle for recognition of their cultural and religious needs and their fight against discrimination.
    - Asians fought against the policy of dispersing the children of immigrant parents across the city schools, causing inconvenience to children and parents and dislocation from their neighbourhood environment.
    - The local Muslim community and the Council of Mosques organised a campaign to get halal meat into schools, which they won in 1984 despite opposition from the white community and the animal rights lobby.
    - Multicultural education policies have ensured that that Asian communities have influence on the school curriculum, for example the introduction of multi-faith religious education and the teaching of community languages.
    - They successfully sought exemption from Asian girls from wearing traditional school uniform and mixed PE and swimming lessons.
    - Asians have increased confidence in challenging the policies and practices of local institutions. The number of Asian parent governors in school management committees continues to grow and schools are taking more note of their expectations.

Political Activity

60. There is a great deal of political activity within the South Asian communities in Bradford.
    - Within each community there are Asian organisations of various types, including overtly political ones. Competition for leadership is fierce, the losers often setting up new organisations. These all compete against each other for external recognition, membership and community resources.
    - Asian interest in local and national politics has increased. Asian membership of all political parties has gone up; up until recently, Bradford's Asian population has shown affiliation to the Labour party, but now the Conservatives are gaining favour.
    - Asians' interest in political developments in their own home countries has not diminished and their reaction is active. Parties such as the Indian Congress and the Pakistan People's Party have active supporters in Bradford, as in the rest of Britain.

Demands for Equality

61. The interaction between members of Asian communities and their organisations and the indigenous community has become closer and more frequent.
    - Contact used to be mainly through council officers working with known community leaders on an ad hoc basis, but now more direct contact has been established between community organisations, their leadership and local

politicians. This has given the Asian communities more influence over local policy decisions.

- Up until the end of the 1970s, Asian communities (and the Pakistani community in particular) made almost no specific demands on local authority resources or services for funds to run schools, establish mosques, set up community centres and so on. The explanation is threefold:
- Firstly there were aware their presence in the city was unwelcome even though their labour was needed and any demand for resources would simply add to the hostility and resentment.
- Secondly they were frequently told that the earlier immigrant communities, especially the Eastern Europeans, were accepted in Bradford because they made no demands, and the Asians should follow their example. This was expressed by not only the indigenous community but also by the Eastern European communities.
- Thirdly the single, male, young and transient migrant is less concerned about his problems and specific needs; their concerns only became more serious when migrants decided to stay and their families joined them.
- Local politicians have gradually abandoned their belief that it was the migrant's responsibility to adapt to the local system and structures because of his or her decision to come here. There is now a recognition that the migrants do have rights of citizenship and the system is obliged to meet their needs as it does for other citizens.
- Despite the appearance that Eastern Europeans have more successfully integrated into Bradford with little help or resources from the indigenous community, it is apparent that they have suffered from neglect of their needs in the past.
- Asians have been very actively involved in the activities of the Racial Equality Council (REC), and once a formal race relations policy was adopted in 1981, its importance was enhanced. Its growing influence on local decisions, particularly allocation of resources and funds was quickly grasped by Asian community leaders, and now almost 80% of its membership is Asian. However, this has caused some alienation amongst less articulate and smaller minority communities.

Race Relations

62. Asians and particularly Muslims in Britain have lived with periodic outbreaks of anti-Asian and anti-Muslim attacks.