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# MEMORY, HISTORY, IDENTITY

Narratives of Partition, Migration, and Settlement among South  
Asian Communities of South Wales

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***DEDICATION***

To Bettina, Teddy, Shannon and Princess

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## ABSTRACT

In Britain today, as well as in all the developed Western countries, more than ever immigration discourse occupies priority space in society, politics, and media. The concern with immigration, *the Diaspora of the Other*, has reached such a point of shrill and racist political discourse, the public political fora have managed to gain substantial support for this cause from their voting citizens.

In this game of socio-political power the entire discourse is mainly focused around economic migrants. All migrants, here, are lumped under the exclusionary and racist discourse ignoring completely the myriad complexities of migrants' background, the structural reasons for their migration, and the substantial economic contribution they make to the countries where they settle down. Lacking political and media power to counter or influence these hostile discourses, immigrants, as minorities, are victims of racist, xenophobic, and exclusionary political practices and, in their own turn, have desperate recourse to their past in order to construct a global minority identity.

Against such a discursive background, my research among the South Asian immigrants in South Wales in UK has provided an alternative and delicately nuanced way of understanding migration in general and migration to UK in particular. The narratives based on the individual and collective memories of *British India* Partition in 1947 and its aftermath, the many routes which their migration took, and the experiences of their settling down in South Wales offer a very unique glimpse into their migratory experience and eventual identity evolution.

Given the historical role Great Britain as the colonial power played in their migration I argue that Britain owes its immigrant citizens the respect they deserve, value their forebears' contribution in its colonial and global wars and post-war economic rebuilding, and their continued, creative contribution to British economy, society, culture and its own multicultural identity.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION-THE CONTEXT

*...the dream of otherness may not be the same as what the Other dreams.<sup>1</sup>*

We live in a globalised world where free trade in goods and services and the movement of capital across borders is an accepted reality. New technologies of communication and transport have made such a movement possible, enormously easy, and effective. The global organizations which operate from multiple locations, linked to some main base in the globalised world where corporate taxes are on vacation, exemplify an extreme manifestation of a borderless world. Even more efficient is the way we can communicate globally without space-time lag.

Instant communication and information transmission has given rise to new communities of global Diaspora migrants belonging to various countries, that is to say, nation-states with multiple national identities, making state borders and its identity guarantees a thing of the past. One can argue that these process of “cultural globalisation, economic and political internationalism, and social transnationalism,” weaken the nation-states and are “transforming the notions of citizenship, and eroding state control over economic performance” (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 151-2). The interconnectedness of the economic process *sans frontiers*, to a very large extent, appears to be valid and globally operative.

If the forces of globalization tend to destabilise national borders through a process of homogenisation of geographies, economies and cultures, then the reactionary movements such as ethnicity, sectarianism, racism and fundamentalism also operate on a similar, globalising logic and threaten to rip apart the national borders trying to erase differences by globalised community mobilisation based on majoritarian

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<sup>1</sup>As found in page 10 of Sayyid, S. 2006. Introduction: BrAsians: Postcolonial People, Ironic Citizens. In: Ali, N. et al. eds. *A Postcolonial People*. London: C. Hurst & Co (Publishers) Ltd, pp. 1-10.

ideology. The fascist politics of *Hindutva* in India, Taliban politics of Sunni sects in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Buddhist Sinhala politics in Sri Lanka, Ethno-nationalism of Eastern Europe, and Neocon politics in the US are some instances of these phenomena at hand. The Jihad politics of Islamic fundamentalist organisations such as Al Qaeda, the Islamic State or the restoration of Islamic Caliphate in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere also operate beyond the logic of the nation state. The editorial in the *Guardian* of August 21, 2014 in the context of the beheading of an American Journalist<sup>2</sup> by a British Jihad worker of the Islamic State puts it in perspective in an appropriate manner:

“That one college boy from, perhaps, London should be the killer of another college boy from New Hampshire in a conflict over the future of the Middle East illustrates how far normal boundaries of state and class have been cruelly transcended.”<sup>3</sup>

These two outcomes of globalization, namely free market fundamentalism and cultural-symbolic fundamentalism, what Benjamin Barber (1995) calls *the McWorld and the Jihad* respectively, define the general context of the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century.

It is against such conflicting world processes that one needs to locate the discourses about immigration politics and migrant belonging as they are predominantly coloured by these processes. The above-mentioned processes not only question the national frame in every aspect but also create conditions that complicate migrant identity and belonging, an issue discussed in detail in the following chapters.

In spite of the destructive tendencies of capital to weaken the state, the enthusiasm shown by states to embrace globalisation and neoliberal capitalism, with their concomitant effects of opening up of the global markets for free trade across the

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<sup>2</sup>More such beheadings have taken place ever since involving Western Jihadis killing captured Westerners.

<sup>3</sup> Editorial, *The Guardian*, Wednesday August 20, 2014 19.07 BST: The Guardian view on the murder of James Foley by ISIS: “If we target Islamic State, they will target us: that is the lesson of this horrific video. See:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/20/guardian-view-murder-james-foley>

borders, is not shared equally when it comes to the free movement of people,<sup>4</sup> a fundamental human right. The existence of nation states, their insistence on the sanctity of borders, and their emphasis on national identity are the constraining ideologies that work against the free movement of people. While the world's capitalists and politicians want free movement of capital and foreign investment, support for labour movement is limited. If capital of every kind is treated with respect, only certain kind of labour is welcomed; that too, strategically, often with electoral outcomes in mind, while treating other migrants as predatory scroungers or security risks. Despite such discourses and discriminatory policies in most countries, especially in the West where there is low birth rate, immigration is an accepted way of replenishing the workforce in order to maintain economic growth. However, due to the persistence of traditional forms of nationalism, the presence of culturally different people is feared and presented as a destabilising force when it comes to national identity. While most political parties use this existential anxiety of their populations to maximise electoral advantages, their paymasters (national and multinational corporations) cannot sustain their hunger for profits without cheap immigrant labour. While this has been the major factor that is facilitating immigration to the economically developed countries, the side effects of the same globalization process and its destabilising effects on different cultural communities has produced more and more economic migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who are treated as refuse of the neoliberal capitalist order in most of the immigration discourses.

The migration of people across borders is not a new phenomenon; nor is it a unique outcome of globalization. It had been a natural human phenomenon throughout history. However, it has become a dominant discourse in many countries due to its scale and the anxiety that is created among indigenous people through these

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<sup>4</sup> The issue of the free movement of people from within the EU is occupying British politics in such a way that it has the possibility of bringing to power extreme right wingers from political upstarts such as UK Independence Party (UKIP), dragging Britain out of the EU. Nicholas Watt and Rowena Mason, The Guardian, Thursday October 16, 2014 20.53 BST: "Tories harden up anti-Europe stance as fear of UKIP by-election win grows" (See: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/16/tories-rochester-strood-eu-arrest-warrent-david-cameron>, on 22nd October 2014.

discourses. It is tactically deployed and manipulated by the political and media interests. For this reason I treat globalization and neoliberalism as contexts for any discussion about migration and discourses surrounding immigration in the 21st century.

The story of migration of the South Asians to various parts of the world, especially to the West, is not just a result of the process of globalization, but has multiple causes and complex trajectories spanning several centuries (Visram 2002). Chief among them is the colonisation of South Asia by European powers, especially the British, resulting in the impoverishment of the region, the indentured labour dispersion of populations of these colonies across the empire, the haphazard manner of the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947 when the British gave up their imperial power, and the demand for labour in the West for the post-Second World War reconstruction of Britain. Further causes include Africanisation policies in post-independent East Africa and its racial aftermath, and in recent decades, the economic migration which can be identified as an effect of globalisation (Brah 1996). Due to their unique historical condition and the state of the world economic order, the migrations of South Asians at an earlier phase, say prior to the 1960s, was designated as old migrations, whereas those that are taking place after this period are designated as new. But we cannot sustain such distinctions anymore because of the re-migration of many old migrants from their first destinations of migration. Hence, today, most of these migrants from South Asia live all over the globe. With the postmodern condition of their multiple belongings and the resulting double consciousness, they exhibit the typical and often contradictory characteristics of a Diaspora community with essentialist as well as fluid identities and postmodernist social formations (Mishra 2007).

The islands that we call the United Kingdom have a long history of immigration and emigration. As a result, the composition of the population of the island is so mixed that, today, hardly anyone can legitimately call themselves the original inhabitants, except probably, for Celtic people. In addition, the long term effects of the colonial adventures of the British have irrevocably institutionalised a cosmopolitan outlook in

this country (Winder 2010). However, British society is not immune to prejudice, racism and hatred towards those perceived as different such as the Jews, immigrants from the colonies, postcolonial labour immigrants, and currently the East Europeans and refugees from the Middle East. Very often, large sections of the national media set an agenda that reflects xenophobia and anti-immigrant hatred, providing fertile ground for exclusionary political discourse which was the predominant discourse in most general elections.

It was at the height of such a media discourse, fuelled by the election manifesto of the British Conservative Party in the 2005 general election that I happened to arrive in the UK and was appalled by the racist connotations of the discourse which I found to be no different than the one deployed by the Hindu fundamentalists in India against the minorities which I had intended to leave behind. In India the majoritarian Hindu fundamentalist exclusionary discourses and mobilisations, which made their way into mainline political discourse in the 1980s, have succeeded in dividing the society deeper on communal lines. The destruction of the Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh in 1992 followed by the genocide pogroms carried out against the Muslims, Christians and other minority groups, causing several innocent deaths and destruction of property have further destroyed the democratic fabric of the Indian society. The divisive politics of Hindu fundamentalists was perfected by the pogroms against the Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, killing more than 1,000 Muslims, under Narendra Modi who has become the Prime Minister of India in May 2014 reaping the fruits of his anti-minority rhetoric. Having witnessed a decade long anti-minority discourse unleashed on the nation by Hindu fundamentalists in order to consolidate the power of the majority Hindus against minorities and the direct effect of such discourses and mobilisations in the form of communal violence, I had been looking for a mature electoral discourse at least in the UK, a country that provided a model for a secular, democratic constitution for an Independent India.

However, what I witnessed here was a similar discourse but against different migrant minorities, most of whom had belonged to the majority communities in the countries

from where they had migrated.<sup>5</sup> Having witnessed the anti-immigrant discourses bordering on racism, where the term immigrant was used indiscriminately against everyone who had arrived into the UK, I started asking the questions: Who are these immigrants? Why did they come here despite such a rabid exclusionary, racist political environment? Did they know that they would end up being in such a hate-filled socio-political environment? Were those, mostly unskilled or poorly educated South Asians who arrived here after the Indian Partition to work in British factories for the post-World War II reconstruction, the only targets of derision or are the multibillion dollar investors such as the Mittals, Tatas, Hindujas and others, who took over the ailing British or European companies such as Arcelor, Corus, Land Rover, Tetley also treated as immigrants and derided the same way?<sup>6</sup> After all, in Greater London alone in 2004 there were 39,000 businesses owned by Asians employing 300,000 people<sup>7</sup>. Nearly ten years later their contribution and participation in the UK economy as well as in the UK politics is certainly greater as noted by Josephine Moulds:

“Asian-owned businesses in London have a turnover of about £60bn a year, while real Asian wealth increased by 69% between 1998 and 2005, compared with UK GDP up just 23pc. .... In 1987, the first four members of parliament from ethnic minorities were elected in half a century. Now there are 15 MPs

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<sup>5</sup> It is very interesting to note how these very minority migrant groups in the West who fight for their rights under the banner of universal human rights often close their eyes over violence against minorities in the countries of their origin, perpetuated by their own kith and kin forming the majority there. There is evidence that these migrant groups in the West often fund such fundamentalist, exclusionary agendas in the countries of their origin.

<sup>6</sup> David Cameron when he visited India in February 2013 praised ‘hard working Indian immigrants,’ offered Indian Government a say in British Immigration policy while, at the same time, in Britain a racist immigration discourse was going on about how to keep Eastern Europeans from the new EU member countries from entering the UK. This stance taken by Cameron is cited as evidence that racism is less colour coded these days than the economic rise of countries such as India which make them more respectable immigrants compared to Bulgarians and Romanians. Comment by Alana Lentin, theguardian.com, Monday February 18, 2013. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/18/cameron-immigration-indians-good> on 22nd October 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Data from the 2004 London Annual Business Survey reveals that in 2004 there were almost 39,000 Asian owned businesses in London alone employing over 300,000 people which means 14 per cent of Businesses in London are Asian owned creating 12 per cent jobs and contributing £60bn (13 per cent) to London’s economy in 2002/2003. Source: Report published by Greater London Authority 2005: The contribution of Asian-owned businesses to London’s economy. See: [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/asian\\_businesses.rtf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/asian_businesses.rtf), downloaded on 20/08-2014.

from ethnic minorities, the majority of them Asian (Moulds 2007, Telegraph Web Edition).

Some of the richest people living in the UK today are South Asians. How does the British state deal with these economic elites? What about those professionals who were recruited by the National Health Service (NHS) and other similar specialities? Are they also immigrants loathed like the poorly educated working class? They came here because they possessed skills that the British economy fell short of and on invitation from Britain. Is it their fault that they are also lumped together with those unwanted migrants? And finally, what about those students who arrive here every year, whose numbers are projected to increase in the coming years due to the growing affluence of South Asia and other parts of the world, paying enormous amounts of international student fees and spending an equal amount as living expenses?<sup>8</sup> Do they not contribute to the UK economy? These last categories of immigrants are not poor refugees, but they are risk-taking migrant entrepreneurs ready to leave the comforts of their homes and their countries in search of economic opportunities. How would they feel about this kind of lumpen categorisation for the purpose of electoral rhetorical spectacle? Should they suffer the brunt of racist and exclusionary discourses just because the British state has failed to employ an inclusive language in its policy discourse?

Having already contributed a huge amount of fees and living expenses for my own higher education in the UK, the immigration discourse at the national elections of 2005 deeply affected my perception of British society. It made me question the logic behind this xenophobic politics in the UK and all over Europe. In the following years the politics of immigration discourse has only turned more ugly bringing overtly racist political formations closer to power in many European countries (Fekete 2005). Why is it happening today rather than a decade ago? Why is 2014 different from the initial

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<sup>8</sup> A study by the British Council published in 2004 forecasts 9.1 per cent growth in South Asian students applying for higher education abroad. Bohm, A., et al. "Forecasting international student mobility: A UK perspective." London: British Council (2004).

years of the 21st century? What has contributed to this change in people's attitudes towards immigrants? What formative historical narratives or discourses are lurking behind these attitudes?

In order to make sense of the general political discourse prevalent about immigrants in the West and how the immigrants themselves respond to these discourses in the process of negotiating their belonging, I decided to consider South Asian migration to the UK (and other parts of the world) as the topic of my research. The aim of such a research was to find how South Asian immigrants see themselves in the UK as against the hostile, exclusionary and often racist discourse. Answers to these questions would provide some glimpses into the unique nature of the causes that force or induce people to migrate or leave home, the manner in which they interact with established communities when they migrate, the nature of the communities they come to establish and the identities they come of assume in the process of negotiating their belonging. In order to provide a context for my research objectives, the following section will introduce the ruling international economic environment of globalization, the chief cause behind large scale migration in recent decades, its impact on the nature and functioning of the nation-states and the resultant politics of xenophobia where the migrant is the object of this geopolitical discourse.

## GLOBALIZATION, NATION-STATES AND POLITICS OF XENOPHOBIA

That people migrate for various reasons is an age-old phenomenon in human history. For over one and a half centuries (the 1830's to 1960s) emigration was a phenomenon that affected European societies but it was hardly studied. In real terms since the 16<sup>th</sup> century over 65 million Europeans migrated; of whom 90% migrated after 1800 (Lucassen 2012). Instead, immigration was viewed from the perspective of assimilation of new immigrants into the existing communities. This was because it was predominantly a European phenomenon, where people left for the Americas or Australia to join their already settled brethren. However, immigration has drawn considerable attention everywhere in recent years, particularly after 1970 (Harzig and



Hoerder 2013). The period from the 1970s coincides with the spread and intensification of globalization which has produced epic level economic and social upheavals throughout the world, not to mention the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the European Union evolving from European Economic Community. Facilitated by modern means of transport and communication, people whose existing livelihood has been made to collapse by the imperialist adventures and globalist expansion of Western governments, those uprooted by natural disasters, wars, ethnic conflicts and the breaking down of nation states that are arbitrarily put in place by colonial powers, and those that are subjected to regime change under the pretext of war on terror, are forced to move seeking an alternate livelihood and a peaceful life (Kundnani 2007). And hence, today, when compared with previous eras, despite divergent views, globalization is seen as a significant cause for peoples' movement across the globe on an unprecedented scale, causing dislocation of identities (Woodward 2003). This has brought people of different colours, cultures and practices into communities once considered to be ethnically or culturally homogeneous resulting in unprecedented social upheaval and change.

Globalization as a phenomenon is experienced and understood in very different ways. On the positive side, it evokes images of interconnectedness among far flung areas of the world and movement of peoples across the borders of the globe. Such cross-border processes have led to questioning the prejudices and animosities that dominated among peoples. The process is also perceived as a progressive moment in human history where orthodoxies are forced to loosen their sway over people and as a result people are able to make decisions about their lives and move to places where they can best develop their abilities.

But the flip-side of globalisation is also equally felt and articulated. The prime casualty of globalisation is the ability of the nation-state to wield control over its economic, social, and judicial spheres, not to mention the issue of managing the populations. There are also fears in some societies among the indigenous populations that their cultures will be swamped by globalised cultures making their identities submit to

market forces (Habermas 2001). These developments are certainly affecting the very nature of nation-states with their traditional functions.

Of all the effects of globalization, migration is receiving serious attention in all those countries that are affected by such a large scale arrival of people (Woodward 2003). When a foreigner or someone different is seen living and working in the area the native communities feel the visible effects of globalisation. This sets in motion various kinds of anxieties and prejudices which are harvested by almost all political parties employing a variety of discourses to shore up electoral gains by setting the majorities against the minorities.

What is deliberately missing in these political and media discourses is the actual role of the West in the past and at present in bringing about the devastation of livelihoods and cultures all over the globe. It is because the entire discourse is controlled by the so called 'specialists' in the media and the academy, as Arun Kundnani (2007: 4) argues: "[T]he intricate history of the West's exploitative ties to the rest of the world is erased by an army of commentators, pundits and so-called experts who construct the scaffold on which a myopic view of the non-Western world is constructed". Instead, as a response to the vanishing powers of the traditional nation-state, whose primary functions of protecting internal sovereignty over its populations and external sovereignty over its borders, in place of reasoned discussions, affective discourses are deployed to create a muddled atmosphere of fear and suspicion among citizens. However, the manner in which the state is weakened by the forces of globalisation and neoliberalism is clearly presented by Dunn (1994: 4-5) in the following words:

The present sense of crisis in the efficacy of the nation state comes from a resonance between two very different types of shift: a fading in all but the most extreme settings (typically those of armed conflict) in the normative appeals of the idea of the nation state, and a brusque rise in awareness of a series of new and formidable challenges (economic, ecological, military, political, even cultural) the scope of which plainly extends far beyond national boundaries

and effectively ensures that they cannot be successfully met within such boundaries (Quoted in Donnan & Wilson 1999: 153).

With the loss of power to manage the economy and provide security to its citizens the nation-states have lost considerable legitimacy among their own populations. In order to reclaim their power and consolidate the nation on the ever weakening basis of national borders and national cultures, (both of which have become elusive and ambiguous categories) they try to deploy the only remaining sphere of influence at their disposal: national culture and national identity. This is done by adopting the following two approaches: to show that they still possess sovereignty over the national territory stricter immigration controls are introduced; to show that the nation still possesses a national culture, old worn out ethnic nationalist discourses are redeployed. Both efforts have been proving more and more exclusionary and racist giving rise to a politics of xenophobia (Balibar 2009). This exclusionary logic of the nationalist frame of old wineskins is applied to contain the new wine of a changed situation of national communities with multicultural and pluralist populations. The efficacy of such a frame needs questioning because nation- states, as we find them today, are historical and discursive constructions that emerged as an outcome of specific circumstances in human history to serve the needs of those times (Bhabha 1994). The present, changed circumstances demand new and flexible frames that can satisfy the ethical and existential situation of multicultural and pluralist existence of humanity today (Hall 2002), of which the migrant is a real and metaphoric subject representing this change.

## NATIONS, BORDERS, MIGRANTS

The dominant view of the nation-state, in its present incarnation, is constructed on the logic of ethnic or linguistic homogeneity. However, despite its being everywhere in the world, “its forms and structure are not universal [.....]; for it is constructed institutionally and symbolically in myriad ways across the global landscape” (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 151). Nation-states, in their present state of evolution, are products of

multiple wars and genocides resulting in partitions and borders with ethnic or cultural homogeneity as foundational myths, adopting various binary categories about people such as: We: they, citizens: non-citizens, natives: migrants, Germans (Indians, Americans): foreigners. However, borders have always failed to serve people's requirements that stem from their socio-economic and cultural needs as argued by Horseman & Marshall (1995: 45):

There has always been a tension between the fixed, durable and inflexible requirements of national boundaries and the unstable, transient and flexible requirements of people. If the principal fiction of the nation-state is ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity, then borders give the lie to this construct (As quoted in Donnan & Wilson 1999: 10).

The binary, exclusionary thinking is the result of borders and nations and the discourses that accept nations with territorial and ethno-cultural borders as inevitable realities. Such thinking had its origin in recent history. As observed by Strath, after the "French revolution the fiction of the nation constituted the most important social configuration and outcome of social self-reflection and interpretation" (Strath 2008: 23). National institutions influenced how people saw the world and themselves. The understanding that certain cultural commonalities are essential for building and maintaining socio-political communities was the underlying principle in the founding of the nation-state. This logic is at the root of dividing populations into majorities and minorities (Appadurai 2006). Most often such rigid perceptions have caused social and national divisions and they are at the root of the exclusionary practices associated with liberal democracies everywhere today. This, in no way, should restrict one from questioning their continued deployment as Strath would argue:

[T]he fact that many societies in Europe have long been based on the concept of national cultural-linguistic and/or religious commonality, or the idea of some strong interpretative bond as the cornerstone of the modern polity should not lead to the conclusion that they are a given for ever. Strong interpretative bonds change in the long run (Strath 2008: 23).

Strath's argument implies that one needs to recognise the dilemma that we face while dealing with issues of borders, migrations and identities and accept their contingent and relative nature. Thus, the first concept that needs deconstruction is the very concept of the nation itself, a construct that has caused and continuing to cause so much violence, wars, displacement of populations, refugees and migrants all over the world.

The nation, as a concept, is exclusionary by definition. Nation with borders, both physical and cultural, creates migrants and sets them against natives while at the same time enacting policies to deal with the issues of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural composition of their populations which it cannot but accommodate in some manner. In the national discourse under the logic of nationalism this necessitates an inherent hierarchy while referring to migrants, minorities and those who do not fit neatly into this construct. In this process of identifying or differentiating between those who belong and those who do not, great violence, real and symbolic, is meted out to minorities and those who are perceived as outsiders or ethnic others. Their access to national identity is made contingent upon the majority's acceptance threshold (Balibar 2009). This violence is against humanity needs confronting because, today, the conditions of human existence have moved beyond the binary constructions on the basis of essentialist identities. This process should begin with questioning the myth of national identity.

With globalization and the increased migration of peoples, no nation can talk about its pristine ethnic or cultural unity anymore. Referring to Europe, Strath argues that "the conceptualization should deal with a European cultural model based upon diversity" (2008:23). This applies to all nations today as they all experience migration and contain minorities in various degrees. Thus, as the old nationalist framework has become inadequate, new constructions of fictive ethnicity that can integrate all primary identities into the national community need to be thought (Balibar 2009). This implies not only acceptance and respect for difference within communities, but also

acceptance and respect for the uniqueness of other nations and cultures that form part of the community of nations. This new way of conceiving the world relativises existing borders as well as essentialist identities among the people of the world, opening up visions of new and fluid borders and identities that transcend borders in line with new solidarities that emerge to face the challenges that threaten life, freedom, and security of entire humanity. These challenges demand cooperation but not domination, solidarity but not subjugation, and an ethics based on the value of the singularity of beings. It is here the migrants that moved from their homes and homelands provide an experiential frame for a life suited to a world without borders. The migrant, the exile, and those that represent bare life provide the ground for ethical thinking and action. South Asians, with their unique experience of colonial repression and impoverishment, partitions and displacement, communalism and violence, migrations and the strategies of belonging, stand out as both real and symbolic agents of globalisation and post-national living.<sup>9</sup>

## SOUTH ASIANS IN THE UK

Indian or South Asian migrants are not new to Britain. Through the Orientalist discourse prevalent in British society the images about South Asians and their society already existed in Britain prior to their physical arrival as migrants (Said 1985). It is through the colonial contact of over 200 years of British rule in India that the colonial Indian had been making her presence in Britain felt through various narratives and discourses. Such narratives made their presence felt through the experiences and stories brought home by middle class colonial administrative employees, by soldiers who were mostly of working class background and, not least, by journalists and writers (Brah 1996). Such, mostly Orientalist discourses, have continued to dominate despite the fact that Indian voluntary army fought the Wars of British Empire in World War I and World War II. If over 1.45 million South Asian soldiers participated in World

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<sup>9</sup> Postcolonial theory is urged to move beyond its oppositional discourse against colonial discourses towards forging expansive solidarities that go beyond nationalist conceptions and visualise an “ethically and politically enlightened global community” where hybrid and Diaspora identities of migrants are viewed as real and metaphoric of this new way of life. See the discussion in Gandhi, L. 1998. *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. Columbia University Press.

War I fighting for the British Empire, over 2.5 million in the Second World War did so at various locations around the globe. From among those who fought in WWI over 74,000 lost their lives and from among those who fought in WWII over 90,000 lost their lives. Besides the soldiers and officers, if one took into account the role played by countless number of tradesmen, including seamen, cobblers, cooks, tailors, cleaners and coolies one would realise the scale of South Asian participation in British Empire's World Wars. Rightly, for this reason, it has to be acknowledged that it was not Britain that fought these wars and won, but it is the entire British Empire that fought these wars and won (Stadtler 2013; Khan 2015). As for those Indian soldiers who fought with the British, while Britain conveniently ignored their role in British national imaginary, Independent India treated them with ambivalence and hardly recognised them as part of the national narrative (Karnad 2015).

Despite the role of South Asian soldiers, the presence of Indians as students, and the colonial employees or political elites visiting the UK during the colonial period, it is their economic migration that is highlighted in the current British context because it neatly fits into the present day immigration discourse. In reality, South Asians' arrival in the UK as typical economic migrants was primarily a post WWII phenomenon and facilitated chiefly by the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 when the British ended their colonial rule. Ever since, the subcontinent and its people, both there and in the Diaspora, have been struggling to recover from the pain of the conflict, division, death and continued communal rift it caused (Kamra 2006). The after effects of this event are still felt in relations between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and, within these nation-states, between various communities. This is especially true of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims living in the sub-continent and even in Britain as my interviews with them show.

As Britain experienced severe labour shortages during the post-World War II period of economic expansion, many from among those displaced and dispersed populations migrated to the UK bearing the wounds of suffering and communal hatred. At the same time, having been systematically exploited during the colonial period, Britain's

ex-colonies faced a future of poverty. They had a large labour force, but insufficient means to make this labour productive (Sivanandan 1976). Hence, migration of labour from the ex-colonies to the metropolis during the 1950s was largely a direct result of the history of colonialism and imperialism of the previous centuries. It started as early as the 1950s as noted by Robert Winder who records:

[I]n 1955 just over 5,000 Indians came; in 1956, 5,600; and in 1957, 6,600. ....

Among the Indians to embark were the Eurasians or Anglo-Indians, the products of mixed marriages during Britain's two century affair with the subcontinent. Around thirty thousand such people landed in the years following the war (Winder 1976: 354-55).

The early immigrants were often Christian who knew English and easy to integrate. The others who came during these years were Sikhs from divided Punjab, Hindus from Gujarat, Muslims from East and West Pakistan and many more from places such as Bombay, Mirpur, and Sylhet.

The mid-1960s witnessed an increase of the South Asian population in Britain by new arrivals from East Africa, mostly thrown out of the countries where they had houses, jobs, businesses and families (Brah 1996). However, the last three or so decades have seen large South Asian migrations to the UK which can be understood as a result of the expanding processes of globalization. According to the 2011 census over 3 million South Asians live in the UK (5.8% of the 56.1 million people living in the UK), of which 21,884 live in Wales (0.8% of the 3.1 million people living in Wales).<sup>10</sup> However, despite the presence of South Asians in the UK from the colonial period and continuing to increase steadily in the following decades, one is forced to ask the question: are South Asians in the UK still viewed from the same old colonial, Orientalist frame of discourse or is there a change in perception? The other question would be: do the South Asians themselves experience such stereotypical perceptions despite their being lumped together with other groups of immigrants.

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<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, *British Asian*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Asian#cite\\_note-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Asian#cite_note-5) downloaded on 28th August 2014.



According to postcolonial critique Sayyid: “[T]he representations of South Asians in Britain have for the most part continued to rely on a conceptual vocabulary borrowed from the legacy of Indology and its allied disciplines” (Sayyid 2006: 2). Indology is a variant of the discourse of Orientalism<sup>11</sup> which could also be called colonial discourse that “typically rationalises itself through rigid oppositions such as maturity: immaturity, civilisation: barbarism, developed: developing, progressive: primitive” (Gandhi 1998: 32). It compares Indian ways of living in opposition to assumed normative Western practices and, as such, they are seen as distortions and aberrations. Such stereotypical categories are employed in the tropes of caste, arranged marriages, notions of honour and kinship groups. “They help to identify South Asian settlers as essentially ‘Indian’” (Sayyid 2006: 2). These tropes have emerged from the British experience of India acquired through colonial gaze as already mentioned above.

In the postcolonial context, despite the liberal humanist façade in the West, immigrants experience coloniality at every turn. Coloniality refers to discourses which “enshrine the hegemonic authority of the West over the non-West, the moral high ground of Europeanness over non-Europeanness, and the global value of white populations over non-white populations” (Hesse and Sayyid 2006: 17). This form of coloniality is a systemic feature in the governmental, cultural, and social processes in the West manifest in racial and multicultural forms of governance where populations are marked as host-community: immigrant-community where immigrant is a signifier of ex-colonialism. To retain this marking as a structural and political separation within the nationalist present the immigrant is racially marked whereas the indigenous population is racially unmarked (Hesse and Sayyid 2006).

As a result of such ways of viewing, the presence of South Asians as a people with a concrete history escapes national discourse, where all that is left is a frame of “dis-embedded, de-historicised objects frozen in time.” These often express themselves

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<sup>11</sup> Said, E. (1978), *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York

through cultural stereotypes. For a migrant it becomes imperative, therefore, to engage with a discursive practice such as postcolonial criticism.<sup>12</sup> It is against such dominant and stereotypical discursive frames that the South Asians had to negotiate their belonging in Britain. Were the South Asian immigrants aware of such discourses? Did they try to contest them? If they did, how did they do it? What sources did they have at their disposal in order to construct discourses to forge their identities and political action? These are some of the major questions in this thesis.

In the process of contesting the dominant frames, the first issue that needs to be stressed is the role of British Colonial rule of several centuries, its irresponsible and immoral contribution to the Partition of India, and the impoverishment of the subcontinent that caused large scale displacement of populations, the predominant contributing factor for the migrations (Butalia 2000). This causal factor of coloniality is sidelined in British immigration discourse. Instead, as Hesse & Sayyid (2006) argue, the South Asian immigration is treated merely as a “post-war condition of labour shortages as a catalyst for immigration from the colonies, without any consideration of the impact of coloniality, as a political and social culture, on Britain’s nation-empire, as if nation and empire belonged to incommensurable temporalities, polities and spaces” (p15). This strategy of lumping South Asian immigration with other immigrations is an issue that needs questioning because there is a need to situate South Asian immigrants within the context of colonial exploitation and the ethical horizon of admitting the moral responsibility of such exploitation.

Viewed from such a perspective, if the relationship of South Asians with Britain was not just between those of colonial rulers and colonial subjects, nor of a Western nation

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<sup>12</sup> Hesse and Sayyid (2006) identify three types of coloniality that needs contesting by way of a) decolonising the representations of the decolonised which refers to all forms of knowledge deployed in the representations of the ‘formerly colonised’ and their descendants; b) decolonising representative decolonisation which refers to the continuing manner in which categories such as citizenship, democracy, national identity are deployed as unequal power tools to differentiate between European/white and non-European/non-white; c) decolonising the representatives of decolonisation which refers to western liberal institutions that instituted and administered formal decolonising process while still being entrenched in sustaining coloniality in various ways. Hence, postcolonial critical discourse is a three-pronged political contestation.

and its economic migrants but of brothers in arms<sup>13</sup> (Winder 2004) who assisted the British Empire win its wars, contributed towards the rebuilding of British industries and health institutions such as NHS, what, then, is this unique relationship and place do South Asians demand to have in the collective British memory (or, *the national imaginary*)? Can they be still viewed merely as immigrants who came here as benefit scroungers to use free health care and steal British jobs as the dominant media and political discourse paints immigrants in general? Instead should they not be seen as risk taking, hard-working and enterprising adventurers who, through their historic British link, contribute to the British history, economy and socio-cultural life? Thus, the thrust of this research project is to construct an alternate discourse against the still prevalent colonialist and orientalist frames in the ongoing banal political and media discourses about South Asians in Britain. Hence, I have tried to organise my research enquiry with the objective of framing the discourse from the British South Asian immigrant perspective. I have done it by having recourse to the memory-narratives of South Asians living in the UK, their experiences and stories of Partition, the stories of their journeys and the struggles they went through to settle in the UK. I want to pay special attention to how they perceive themselves today and relate themselves to this country of their adoption. Through this process, I believe, my research will provide a counter-narrative and contribute to discussions about immigration, multiculturalism and radical plural democracy with an ethical approach of human dignity that embraces immigrants and minorities of every kind in the national imaginary in an inclusive manner.

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<sup>13</sup> In World War I Indian Army provided 1.45 million men who served for the British Empire in France, East Africa, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Of these the army lost 53,486 men, 64,350 were wounded and 2,937 went missing. In World War II 2.5 million men from Indian army fought for the British Empire of whom 23,338 were killed, 64,354 wounded and 11,754 were missing while 79,489 were held Prisoners of War. (Source: Stadtler, F. 2012, Britain's forgotten volunteers: South Asian contributions to the two world Wars, in Ranasingha, R. 2012, South Asians and the Shaping of Britain, 1870-1950 A Source Book, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 80-146 pp).

## THEORETICAL FRAMES

South Asians, with their multiple migrations across nations due to their readiness to leave home in search of better opportunities, are not merely defined by their roots (where they or their ancestors originate) but much more by the routes they take to travel around in the process of their migration. It is because, their familial, caste or community links are spread all over the globe making them transnational or Diaspora communities affecting their identities. Their identities are “formed through movement and the process of dispersal [.....]” (Woodward 2003: 63). Despite their dispersed condition, the oppressive and often exclusionary environment, they set up their homes and organize the complex negotiations they are required to make in order to belong and produce complex identities.

With their unique history as a people and the complex causes behind their migrations South Asians in the UK had to settle among a people who viewed them through the prism of colonial and Oriental discourse as already discussed. It is in such conditions that they had to find employment, set up homes and negotiate their belonging. This necessitated multiple struggles: in the work place, in public spaces, on the streets and in cultural arena. To confront the colonialist and Orientalist frame from the British national psyche, they had to construct their own narratives and deploy them in political and cultural discourses. In order to inscribe themselves in the British national narrative beyond the frames of the colonial gaze and construct those identity frames that would help them in their struggle against the imposed, hegemonic and racial identities, they had to have recourse to the only source at their disposal: *individual and collective memory*.

Generally, the official histories have been a prerogative of the powerful and dominant groups. Very often they are produced from within ethnic-nationalist frames where the dominant ethnic groups have been ascribed heroic and lofty achievements in the construction of the nation while the loyalty of the minorities is always suspect. As a result, the minorities, the migrants, and other peripheral communities get antagonistic treatment. They are considered a hindrance to the achievement of pure ethnic

nationalist identity and, hence, their contribution finds hardly any mention in the dominant national narratives (Appadurai 2006). Even today, a process of rewriting history on the majoritarian national ideology is the order of the day.<sup>14</sup> In a similar manner people subjected to genocide and extermination (for example Jews in the Holocaust, Armenian genocide in Turkey, victims of Indian Partition violence etc.) will have no way of obtaining justice if not for the memories of the survivors, because all evidence would have often been destroyed by the perpetrators as in the case of the Nazi (Hirsch 2008). It is in this context that memory is treated more and more as a source of understanding the past beyond official history or the dominant narratives. Hence, in Andreas Huyssen's (2003:17) words: "Memory [...] has emerged as an alternative to an allegedly objectifying or totalising history, history written either with small or capital H, that is, history in its empiricist form or as master narrative."

As mentioned above, migrants are a people who are hardly represented in the dominant narratives as legitimately belonging to the nation. They are, rather, subjected to the colonialist and Orientalist frame or the recent anti-immigration discourses. Their contribution, significant though it was to the British Empire in the past and to the economy and national self-understanding of the present, does not still find its rightful place. This realisation is a key motivation behind this research and I would use the theoretical frame offered by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) in his seminal work *On Collective Memory* to make my argument.

Halbwachs argues that the memories that people have are not merely individual and personal but primarily they carry social and collective meanings. He further argued that people normally acquire their memories in groups that they belong to, which accounts for the fact that there exist social frameworks for memory. From the fact of their social frame he calls it *collective memory*. By virtue of being personal, the sites of memories are embodied in a particular person but, being social, they are, at the same time, embedded in society because society provides the conceptual structures to

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<sup>14</sup> The effort of Hindutva ideologues to rewrite Indian history since they came to power in the 1990s and in 2014 in India is a case in point.

remember and to recall them. Given that memory provides a continuous link between the past, the present and the future one can also say that personal and collective memory confers personal as well as collective identity on individuals and groups. This implies that we always recall the past from the perspective of the present to construct a future (Ricoeur 2004). For this very reason memory can also be considered a source of historical understanding.

That memory can be a source of historical understanding is viewed with suspicion by positivist historians for whom the archive is the only legitimate source from where to write history. However, given the nature of the archive and the power/knowledge dynamics at play in what is archived and what is un-archived,<sup>15</sup> empiricist history as the sole source of historical understanding is to be questioned seriously (Pandey 2012). Today, this issue is accepted among many historians who see the limitations of the archive and treat the archive and memory narratives as legitimate ways of understanding the past as well as complementary sources for the production of historical knowledge that is inclusive and representative of various groups or communities. It is because, Dominic La Capra argues, "memory, along with its lapses and tricks, poses questions to history in that it points to problems that are still alive or invested with emotion and value. Ideally, history critically tests memory and prepares for a more extensive attempt to work through our past that has not passed away" (LaCapra 1998: 8). It is from this perspective, and in order to contribute a counter discourse against the colonialist or Orientalist, stereotypical, anti-immigrant discourse to which South Asians are subjected to, that I would like to employ memory narratives as a source for inscribing South Asian presence and contribution to British society.

So, in the theoretical discussion part of the thesis, I will try to find answers to the following research questions: How do historical narratives come about and whom do

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<sup>15</sup> In a Foucauldian perspective an archive is an authorised version of what is sayable while laying down rules for treating much that is being treated as non-sayable or non-sense, gibberish or madness consigning it to outside the domain of history. Beaulieu, A. 2008. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London/New York: Routledge, 2006) ISBN. *Foucault Studies* (5), pp. 74-89.

they represent? Why are strictly positivist approaches to historiography limited in their contribution to inclusive historical representations? What documentary sources can contribute to rectifying these limitations? What way of understanding the phenomenon of memory is appropriate here? How do memory narratives help construct an inclusive historical narrative that can appropriately represent all groups in a nation's self-understanding that is vital for the present age?

This theoretical frame will help me visualise a research method appropriate to tapping into South Asian migrants' memory narratives and presenting them as a counter-narrative to the many exclusionary, stereotypical, and racist narratives prevalent in British national culture about migrants. So, my methodological approach will employ the techniques offered by Oral History interviews. In analysing the interviews, I will strive to retrieve from the memory narratives the uniqueness of the interviewees' situations, the factors that contributed to their decisions to move out, their actual journeys and the experiences of their settlement.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAME

If memory is a legitimate source and a valued tool for the production of historical narratives in the hands of people who find themselves unrepresented or negatively represented in the larger national narratives, South Asian migrants in the UK need it all the more as the way in which they find themselves represented reflects neither the reality of their situation nor do they do justice to the contributions they have made to the British nation during its colonial past and its actual present. However, being a Diaspora people with multiple migrations, their memories are fractured. As a result they produce a multiplicity of histories, often of antagonistic nature, about selves as well as communities. The antagonistic nature of the South Asian communities is due to multiple communal conflicts that culminated in the Partition of the country in 1947 followed by wars and the continuing communal antagonisms present in the countries that they left behind. This has produced the fractured nature of the South Asian community in the UK which is a significant feature of this community that one needs

to keep in mind. Adding to the above, the current atmosphere of Islamophobia in the West and other parts of the world further differentiates how various religious groups are forced to negotiate their internal group relationships and belonging to the nation. This reality of the migrant Diaspora communities is well noted in an editorial comment in the *Journal of Public Culture* (1989: ii), where the authors argue that whatever their form or trajectory, "Diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment." Yet these collective memories and new maps do not always serve to consolidate their old, ethno-national identities; rather, new affinities are formed and life is negotiated anew mounding new identities. It is because, as Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988) argue:

"[M]ore and more Diaspora groups have memories whose archaeology is fractured. These collective recollections, often built on the harsh play of memory and desire over time, have many trajectories and fissures which sometimes correspond to generational politics. Even for apparently well-settled Diaspora groups, the macro-politics of reproduction translates into the micro-politics of memory, among friends, relatives and generations." (1988: ii)

In her book *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Brah argues that the collective experiences of Asians in Britain were important constitutive moments in the formation of the Asian subject. She analyses the economic and social conditions marking Asian experience, highlighting the interplay of state policy, political and popular discourse, and a variety of other institutional practices in the construction of the South Asian as post-colonial other (Brah 1996). While treating South Asian migrants as a single community built on their collective memory is important, one needs to keep in mind that there is also considerable complexity in their collective memory which is antithetical to each other's experiences due to the antagonistic identity politics in South Asia and its spill over effects among the South Asian Diaspora (Kundnani 2002).

Hence, the collective memory of South Asians in the UK is a product of fragmented personal and collective experience articulated and mediated through the technologies of communication and shaped by every instance of recollection and transmission. The ubiquitous nature of the Internet and the real time communication offered by it have



further contributed to the consolidation of Diaspora collective identities (Weedon and Jordan 2012)

The availability of technologies of communication has also affected the manner of Diaspora community affiliations creating a situation in which the communal politics and conflicts taking place in South Asia directly affecting group solidarities in the UK where they exhibit more communitarian rather than national identifications. This factor is important while studying the collective memory of South Asians in the UK as they are more fractured than one would imagine as mentioned already. Moreover, the differential nature of the cultural practices between Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Buddhist immigrants also affects the manner of their belonging in the UK. From this perspective one should be wary of hoping to come across memory narratives that would be universal in every manner. However, there is also considerable sameness in their cultural practices that transcend religious affiliation such as the languages they speak, geographic affinities they share and the challenges they face in the UK that are sufficient to treat them as a community of collective memory and identity. Drawing on existing research on the history of South Asian immigration to the UK, and keeping in mind the fractured nature of their collective memories as well as the cultural and geographic affinities and the similarity of challenges to belonging that they share, my oral history based research, thus, will focus on their memory narratives about their experience of Partition of India, immigration and settlement in Wales with particular reference to Cardiff.

As noted already, the research employs oral history interviews and other forms of memory at work. The interview questions are framed based on broad themes such as:

- Memories of the homeland: What was their experience of partition and being part of the new partitioned entities called India, Pakistan or Bangladesh?
- Narratives of migration: Who came here? Why did they come? How did they come?
- Narratives of settlement: How did they cope with the new country on their arrival?
- Narratives of identity: How did they see themselves in their new country of arrival?
- Colonial constructions: How did their past history and experience of partition affect their living, interaction and integration into British society?

- Postcolonial experiences: How did they deal with each other? How did Indians and Pakistanis who arrived here after the partition interact with each other?
- Second generation memories: What are the memories and perceptions of the second generation immigrants about the issues mentioned above? What role these play in their lives here?
- Second generation identities: How have second generation South Asians been able to construct an identity for themselves in this country and how do the memories of Partition still affect them in forming a collective identity?

## WHY THE PROJECT MATTERS

Given the scale of migration and the discourses that dominate representation of the issue today, exacerbated particularly by an international climate of growing market and cultural fundamentalisms, and the endless ‘War on Terror’ where communities everywhere are being destabilised, finding a balanced and nuanced approach is very important in volatile times such as ours (Barber 1995). If the economic effects of globalisation are producing economic deprivation and existential anxieties, the rise of cultural fundamentalism in the form of Jihad and War on Terror with its genocidal potential are creating huge security threat and communal divide within societies. Both these have contributed to the rise of xenophobia and communitarian politics. Exclusionary and racist politics of the State propagated through the discourse manufactured by the neoliberal, profit-seeking media continually attack the migrant as a foreign body, alienating more and more successive generations of young migrants, while at the same time, tending to legitimise discourses and violence of the far right groups (Kundnani 2012). Traditional solidarities of class and national belonging are disrupted, and fear, suspicion, and identity-oriented affinities are taking hold everywhere with potential for violent conflicts. In such a climate social cohesion is the minimum that nation states would try to maintain between majority and minority ethnic communities. However, the proliferation of ideologically extremist identity-oriented groups, under the banner of multiculturalism, further threaten inter-community interactions even among the immigrant groups.

On the basis of my knowledge and experience I know that in the South Asian communities in Britain, especially in Wales, there are ongoing tensions between different minority ethnic communities who come from the Indian sub-continent. They bring their conflicts with them and even the successive generations are not immune from these old memories of pain and hatred narratives. Moreover, the British discourse about immigration, particularly about South Asians, needs to be more nuanced and move beyond the received and lazily hung-on colonial discursive frames if it intends to achieve a cohesive national community. This situation demands that individuals as well as communities need to think and act beyond the particularist borders and identities of cultural or national communities as the challenges that we face today demand global solidarities. Moreover, through this project I would like to explore how people of South Asian descent remember or participate in post-memory<sup>16</sup> of colonialism and Partition and how it affects them in their efforts at belonging in the UK. By uncovering these collective memories I hope to contribute to the process of coming to terms with the legacies of Partition, communal conflict and the continued prejudice and ignorance about one another.

## THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Later I will discuss the concept of collective memory and its emergence in the arena of understanding the past beyond the dominant historical narratives produced by powerful classes and majoritarian ideologies. For this purpose I engage with Maurice Halbwachs' work, *On Collective Memory* (1992) and that of others such as Jan Assmann (1995) who employ the concept in their research. Here, I discuss how historical writings are a narrative construction produced by hegemonic ideologies in order to legitimise their group power and how such historiography relies on archival sources which themselves are works of inclusion and exclusion. I engage with the discussion

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<sup>16</sup> Post-memory is described by Marianne Hirsch as the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences of their earlier generations that preceded them but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so intensely that they constitute memories in their own right. Hirsch, M. 2008: "The generation of post-memory," *Poetics Today* 29.1 (2008): 103-128.

to argue why memory is a legitimate source for the production of historical narratives that can provide a discursive space for the powerless, marginalised and excluded groups. In this way I argue with Gyanendra Pandey (2012) and Dominic LaCapra (1998) that memory is a legitimate and important source of historical knowledge where both, the archive as well as memory, function as complementary sources.

Following this argument on the value of memory, I discuss in the next chapter how I employ oral history interview technique to tap the memories of South Asian immigrants to South Wales, the suitability of this technique to my research, its limitations and what can be expected from the data obtained through this process. Arguing with Paul Thompson (2003) and Valerie Yow (1994) I employ this technique as a legitimate means to obtain the data that will be thematically analysed in chapters four and five, according to the technique offered by Boyatzis (1998) but by using a more liberal application of his theory.

Equipped with the interview data that is thematically categorised, in chapter four *on journeys and memories: narratives of migration*, I discuss the factors that contributed to South Asian immigrants' decisions to migrate, the factors that helped or hindered them in their journey to cross borders, the role the family, friends and the community played in their migration and settlement, and what they encountered as they landed in the UK and how they dealt with those challenges. Here I utilise the conceptual framework offered by Stephen Castles (2002, 2004, 2007), Harzig & Hoerder (2009) and others to discuss the phenomenon of international migration and community formation, the Diaspora character of South Asians and how it is unique in the case of South Asians. I also discuss issues relating to migrant integration in Western liberal states and critically analyse whether or not South Asian migrants' experience follows any of the trajectories theorised by these authors.

In chapter five *on belonging and identity*, utilising the interview data further, I discuss issues pertaining to migrant belonging and the strategic deployment of identities by migrants in the process of negotiating their belonging. To facilitate the discussion I

draw upon authors such as Bhikhu Parekh (2008), Madan Sarup (1996), Stuart Hall (1996), Flam & Beauzamy (2011), Tariq Modood (1997) and others and argue that embracing identities on essentialist grounds is counterproductive for democratic political participation and national integration and, hence, migrants' identities have to be multiple and hybrid, and deployed as strategies for furthering their political and socio-economic opportunities on the one hand and to visualise and further the cause of a post-national global community on the other.

The concluding chapter *Migrant Memories: Alternate Discourse* tries to indicate some trajectories of my future research interests following this work. It follows from my treatment of the topic of migration and the discourse that surrounds the issue. This chapter is a reflection on the human situation in the 21st century which offers challenges of various sorts that need addressing from an ethical perspective beyond particularist, identity-oriented filiations. Hence, the discussion will focus on the challenges that we, as humans and all beings in general that inhabit this planet, face due to the processes of globalization, neoliberal capitalism and the consequent rise of cultural fundamentalism, environmental degradation, destabilisation of nation-states resulting in the rise of existential anxiety among people, increased pauperisation of large populations and the death and displacement caused by conflicts and the rise of the predatory identity politics all over the globe. Analysing the above issues and their impact on the existence and socio-economic development of migrants and minorities in the world with the help of the concepts from Ulrich Beck (2006) and others, I will argue that humanity today is constrained by nationalist frame of viewing the world that makes it impossible to be think inclusively, and hence, must embrace a cosmopolitan view beyond the one that was proposed by Kant but reinvented in a manner that responds to the demands of present human situation by offering new frames to think beyond borders and identities in organising ourselves as a global human community of the future. In order to achieve such goals there is an urgent need to adopt certain ethical perspectives as visualised by philosophers such as Jacques Derrida (1994), Jean LucNancy (2000), Giorgio Agamben (1993, 1998) and others who propose that real ethical experience is possible only when one is able to take a view of

things and events from a position beyond all identities and borders by treating everyone as a singularity which is unique and radically other. Only when we think in terms of a human community beyond all identity positions and act from such an ethical stance can a community of the future be visualised. All the above mentioned philosophers name this variously, but to put it in Derrida's words it is a *democracy to come*. Before we reach such an ideal community we need to utilise the tools at our disposal, especially those that are proposed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001) in the practice of *Radical Democratic Pluralism*. This is such a kind of political practice where all those groups and individuals who respect each other's difference and value one another's similarities, and come together to fight against the forces of oppression and exploitation where the migrant is a metaphor and an active agent who works towards this community of the future, the *democracy to come*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MEMORY, HISTORY, IDENTITY: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

#### INTRODUCTION

*"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"*

- Milan Kundera (1979)

In the Introduction I suggested that the spread of globalization and large scale migration of peoples across the globe have altered the nature and function of once homogeneous, national communities and rendered them inescapably multicultural and plural. This change has made necessary a redefinition of how national communities see themselves. The old frames of ethnic, national self-understanding have become inadequate because the human condition in the 21st century cannot be grasped from the traditional frames of nationalist thinking. Instead, it demands *a cosmopolitan frame* (Beck 2006) which I would like to name as *thinking beyond borders*. This way of viewing the world requires questioning of all grand narratives that once defined societies with a particular view of their past based on their ethnic homogeneity. It is because they are no more adequate to define today's postmodern, multicultural living with democratic participation as they fail to represent the life and contributions of multiple communities, especially the migrants and minorities that form part of the national culture and economy (Stadtler 2013). The plural nature of societies necessitates an inclusive national story, the creation of a fictive ethnicity (Balibar 2009) that creates a legitimate space for the excluded groups in the national imaginary. My research deals with the South Asian migrants in the UK, a minority with a unique affinity with Britain due to its colonial past and its special contribution to the colonial and postcolonial British society (Ranasinha 2013b) and, in spite of this background, is a victim of stereotypical immigration discourses prevalent in British society today.

This requires questioning of such narratives so that they can find a legitimate socio-political and cultural space in the British national imaginary which is vital for their development and integration into British society. In view of doing so, it is my effort to find a theoretical frame that can question the dominant narratives and inscribe their own narratives rendering them inclusive, plural and democratic.

In order to do so, for lack of archival sources to satisfy the traditional historiography, one needs to search for alternate sources and tools that are powerful as well as legitimate. One such source within reach for people who do not have the privilege of finding themselves in the archives is provided by memory. In the case of the South Asians it is not that they are not found among the sources and archives but, despite their presence in archives, it is at the level of the narrative (memory) as well as the memorial (representation) that they are allowed to be silent. It is these silences that need articulating (Boehmer and Nasta 2013).

Hence, I will be discussing the limitations of archives as the sole source for the writing of history along with the argument that a positivist history alone is not the only legitimate way of writing history. I will further argue that historical writings are like any other study of human behaviour and can provide only a glimpse of the social phenomenon but not the knowledge in its entirety (Hoopes 1979). This is because, in every sense, historical writing utilises narrative techniques which involve the use of imagination and the tropes to produce them (White 1987). Therefore, given the manner of its production it cannot claim superiority over memory whose predominant mode of representation is narrative. This claim of memory as a source to understand better the past and the present in view of dreaming of a future is further strengthened due to its democratic and inclusive nature (Jordan 2010).

Hence, the first section of this chapter will analyse the discursive manner of producing knowledge, with special reference to historical knowledge, followed by a discussion about archives, their role, and their limitations in the writing of history. Then a longer section will discuss the notion of collective memory, how it works, and how it can be



deployed in constructing historical knowledge. As I have already noted in the introduction, migrants are a minority group that hardly finds its legitimate and fair space in official archives commensurate with their contribution. Memory narratives are a major source available for them to counter the stereotypical, official narratives. Due to its key role in providing a counter narrative I treat the discussion about memory in greater detail. This will be followed by a discussion about the role memory plays in the construction of individual and group identities. The chapter will conclude with the argument that both memory and history are necessary and complementary sources to understand and reconstruct the past of a community or nation. Only such an inclusive approach can provide legitimacy for the narratives about a nation's plural and multicultural present and a cosmopolitan vision of a human community of the future that can dream of a life beyond all borders and identities.

My key argument here is to stress the role of memory to construct counter-narratives that can question or complement existing and dominant narratives. Hence, the effort here is to place history and memory in a complementary position. This I try to do through focussing on their mode of producing representations. This happens, in both cases, through their adherence to narrative techniques. In the following section I argue how history, which tends to claim a higher scientific pedestal, in order to produce meaning, still uses imagination in the narrative mode. In this use it is not more different than memory.

## NARRATIVE, DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION

Every representational system is specific to a culture and it is in a given culture that one's identity is represented. Here culture is understood as every manner of making sense of social reality and giving meaning to it. This is done through the ways in which people live their daily lives "constructing meaning through all aspects of their lives" (Woodward 2003). As reality is complex and many-sided, in a postmodern world no one can dream of having monopoly or control over how events are experienced or interpreted. Individuals and groups employ multiple ways to understand reality. So

too, as the centres of power are diverse and non-uniform so too will be their need to inscribe themselves in historical discourses (Foucault 1982). Given the ubiquitous and democratic nature of the media of communication, especially of the social media, any narrative that can be contested can find a place in the public discourse. From such a democratic possibility on offer today one can safely say that peoples' stories have taken over the place of kings' chronicles produced by their court historians. Today's democratic participation by people has taken away the monopoly of the traditional historians to interpret events and, therefore, they are forced to see their historical accounts as narratives offered from one (and, hence, limited) perspective.

However, despite acknowledging the limited character of objectivity that humans can arrive at, professional historians, including those of British background, following the tradition established by Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), staunchly adhere to the arguments that the source of real history lies in archives that can be meaningfully interpreted to understand the past as it happened ("Wie es damals geschah"), free from personal as well as situational bias (Warren 2010). Such rigid perceptions are no more in vogue as there is a realisation that historical writings, being a study of human behaviour, can only provide a partial glimpse of the social, despite following rigid scientific methods of enquiry. As a human science it will contain the normal biases, prejudices, personal and communal dispositions, and "all manner of attitudes and likes and dislikes" which, even the most experienced professionals acknowledge, can affect historical knowledge. It is because historical knowledge deals with the past to which none has direct access and with bare facts one is forced to create a narrative using one's imagination (Hoopes 1979: 1-2).

Given the nature of knowledge that historical writing can provide and the mode of representation that it adopts, it falls under the category of a narrative though many modern historians make a very rigid distinction between narrative and historical writing. This perception, according to Hayden White (1987), is because of the assumption that narrative, due to its imaginary and mythical view of reality, is considered unsuitable to represent real events. This view further assumes that fiction

writers invent everything whereas historians use only verifiable facts employing formal and stylistic features of language. Contending such a view, and analysing history and narrative from the perspective of recent theories of discourse, White argues that there is no “ontological difference between their respective referents, real and imaginary” (White 1987: ix) because both of them use similar linguistic devices to produce meaning. This can be seen from how myths and ideologies that predominantly employ narrative devices manage to represent reality and provide meaning to people’s life (White 1987). If myths and ideologies sustain a meaningful social formation, it also implies that when the nature of a social formation undergoes change it further necessitates a new narrative that can give unity and meaning to life in a changed situation. This new narrative does happen but, very often, through the agency of socially dominant groups and in the form of myths and ideologies. They deploy these new narratives in order to further their interests by interpellating people through various means of coercion, especially through state apparatuses and cultural discourses (Althusser 2006). Historical writings are one such myth-making ideological enterprise which employs narrative technique to produce meaning.

In recent decades, postmodernist thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and others have argued from various disciplinary angles how narrative discourse is vital in creating meaning and the presence of relations of power behind such processes. Recognising the changed nature of the world, they have argued for an end to master narratives as a mode of representing society because they do not represent the true nature of communities of the present. This gap between claim and reality of grand narratives calls for their deconstruction (Lyotard 1984). This is done through the production of counter-narratives that exist within individuals and groups in the form of memory prior to any content it can take on through the processes of representation (historical, autobiographical, artistic) (White 1987). If the nature of historical writing involves all the subjective elements that any human endeavour contains, then the dynamics of power and the value these particular events hold for those who produce these narratives, determine how historical narratives come about. Once this is recognised then one can argue that others with different interests have a legitimate

right to produce their narratives through whatever source they can muster. Memory is one such source.

If the complexity of social reality and the dynamics of power among groups can produce diverse interpretations, positivist history writing can be considered as only one of many ways of representing the past. It can offer meaning or identity to only a particular kind of social formation and serve the interests of particular group(s) of social actors producing only a partial view of lived social reality. In the following section, therefore, I will try to discuss why the traditional manner of writing historical narratives is limited in its understanding the social.

### HISTORY: A GLIMPSE OF THE SOCIAL ACTORS!

Political power and historical writings have always been linked. On the political focus of history Thompson's statement is very revealing:

Until the present century, the focus of history was essentially political: a documentation of the struggle for power, in which the lives of ordinary people, or the workings of the economy or religion, were given little attention ...  
(Thompson 2003: 3)

One would notice that historical time was divided up according to the rule of kings and their dynasties and the events that took place due to their decisions. People came under the purview of history only in exceptional times, such as during civil wars, religious reformations or revolutions. In the context of colonialism people often found their place in official history either as those who were subjected to civilising mission or as those opposed to the colonial rule (Guha 1988). Even when history was written about local places it was done from the point of view of administering the area rather than that of people themselves. It hardly concerned itself with the day-to-day life of the people or communities because, very often, the historians themselves belonged to the governing classes whose interests they were employed to further. If during

monarchic rule they were rightly called royal historians, in modern democracies they could be assigned the nomenclature of state historians. This is because most of them operated within the nation-state ideology and interpreted events from such perspectives. To put it anecdotally, with such objectives to guide them “they had developed no interest in the point of view of the labourer, unless he was specifically troublesome ...” (Thompson 2003: 22). This situation is well illustrated by Ranajit Guha (1988) while studying the history of peasant movements in India during colonial rule where references to peasants were found among police records and only as insurgents. In colonial rule natives appeared in history either as objects of colonial civilising effort or as subjects to be administered and controlled. As such these archival sources, being official documents, would not offer an alternate perspective about the colonised peoples or their life as they lived and viewed it. The same is true of South Asian migrants in the UK who found themselves in the archives mainly as trouble makers and revolutionaries due to their status as colonised people perpetually fighting against colonial rule, rather than as brave, voluntary soldiers who fought for and sacrificed themselves for the British Empire (Visram 2002).

When we try to grasp this partial nature of historical writings and the role of power and ideologies in their production, several questions crop up. For example, would historians, as men aligned with the ruling elite, approach history in a manner that cared to write about the subaltern groups such as women, farmers, working class people or migrants from a subaltern perspective (Guha 1988). Such and similar questions find some answers when one starts questioning the very sources these historians use and the ideologies that guide them in writing historical accounts. Who gets into the archives, who doesn't and why, are vital research questions. These questions gain importance and lead one to the archive as a source for historical writings. I discuss them in the following section.

## THE HISTORIAN AND THE ARCHIVE

The traditional history writing which concerned itself with the life of the ruling classes could be looked at critically with the key concepts offered by Michel-Rolph Trouillot

(1995) where he argues that history, as a social process, involves people in three different ways: as *agents* who occupy various positions in the social structure; as *actors* who are in constant interaction with the context; and as *subjects* who are aware of their being part of the discourse. However, depending on their position and the power they wield in society they either get into the sources (archives) or are left out and become part of *deep silence*. If being part of the ruling establishment by class or by profession affects the sources used by historians to create their narratives, it clearly sheds light on the limitations of their methodology. Referring to the traditional historians' practice in producing an inclusive history, Thomson remarks:

[...] even if they had wished to write a different kind of history, it would have been far from easy, for the raw material from which history was written, the documents, had been kept or destroyed by people with the same priorities. The more personal, local, and unofficial a document, the less likely it was to survive. The very power structure worked as a great recording machine shaping the past in its own image (Thompson 2003: 23).

Thompson clearly explains the managed nature of an historical archive. Accordingly, an archive generally contains only that information which the powers that recorded it deemed it to be worthy, useful, and true. Such an approach had certainly suited monarchical systems of power. We know that not much has changed in the manner of representing people in history in modern states despite their being democracies with citizens because the traditional ways of constructing history served the interests of the ruling elite and the intellectuals who shared their cause. Therefore, the original political and administrative focus has still remained dominant in history writing.

People, as such, still struggle to insert their version of the narrative in the national story. In this struggle the situation of the migrants and minorities is dire indeed. The nature and dynamics of power in society make their presence in historical discourse an uphill task to explain. As observed by Derrida (1996) and Foucault (2006), in today's

world, where the governments have become handmaidens of the neoliberal economic order, people are treated either as units of consumption or as trouble makers who need controlling and managing. In order to achieve the objectives of capital, the state continually devises discourses and technologies to manage and control people. Immigration discourse is one such state artefact in a neoliberal world. The migrant, the refugee, the minority as a category, is an easy target for such a treatment without much political risk.

For Derrida (1996) traditional archiving is an exercise of homogenising and bringing heterogeneity under control by classifying information. All states deem it vital to establish control over that which does not fall neatly within their organising principle. So, they will try to domesticate and consign information to the archives only to present it as an authoritative and unquestioned historical source of genuine knowledge. However, he argues, in this sick or feverish process of archiving something slips off or unarchives itself and, to that extent, the archive fails as an authoritative source. It is that which does not lend itself for homogenising and categorising that remains outside, unarchived and unacknowledged as nomad science (Deleuze and Guattari 1986. See their *Nomadology*). In the same way, for Foucault (2006), the archive authorises only that which is deemed to be utterable and permissible by a particular society and culture, and the rest ends up being negated or marked as negligible, nonsense, gibberish or madness ending up outside the domain of (archive) history.

This domain contains not merely the events of consequence that elude the process of archiving, but the everyday life of persons and communities that are not deemed to be worthy of entering the official archives. Hence, as Gyanendra Pandey observes:

[...] the very process of archiving is accompanied by a process of ‘un-archiving’: rendering many aspects of social, cultural, political relations in the past and the present as incidental, chaotic, trivial, inconsequential and, therefore, unhistorical. In a word, the archive as a site of remembrance and doing the work of remembering is also at the same time a project of forgetting (Pandey 2012: 38).

Pandey further illustrates this by referring to the everyday discrimination and violence suffered by people of lower social categories in India, the Blacks in America, the Gypsies in Europe, women everywhere and people with different sexual orientations in most societies, to which can be added the jobless and the disabled in British society of today. For the archive these are trivial, everyday events, and do not qualify for being categorised as historical record. And even if they did enter the archive, they find their place as merely belonging to a category of people with trouble to be dealt with as argued by *Subaltern* historians (Chakrabarty 2002). This is due to an ideological approach for which "History, with a capital H, must be eventful. The personal, the familial, the everyday is by comparison trivial" (Pandey 2012: 39). Hence, for a critical history as against the traditional, rationalist history that is obsessed with archives as the primary or the only source of history, one needs to focus on the everyday life of people and communities, which falls under the category of "un-archived histories" (Pandey 2012: 37). In the absence of written records, the sources for such a history are communities with living memory.

In a democratic world people's lives are diverse and clamour for recognition and justice. With the development of mass media, and especially digital media, the world has become multi-polar and power ought not to reside, but generally tends to do so, in the hands of the ruling elite who also manage the state and determine the national narrative. In a globalized world, where people traverse borders of every kind choosing to be transnational citizens, their life stories and experiences cannot be made effectively to fit into any single national narrative. This calls for a new kind of history writing and national narrative which is inclusive of all the groups that reside within a nation (Stadtler 2013). Such history writing requires non-traditional sources. Aptly, the new historians, who want to look into peoples' lives in their various manifestations, have found this source in memory, both individual and collective.

Hence, the democratisation of history demands that the focus on its content and the methodology of gathering content change. This, in turn, changes the dynamics



between the historians and their audience. With the arrival of Oral History as a legitimate method for the recuperation of history the relationship of history and the historian with the community is restored because historians have come to treat peoples' life as an important area requiring due attention. If history has to serve a purpose then it should submit itself to the "collective need, an active relationship to the past" (Chesneaux 1978:1). History, therefore, is not a dry chronicle of the past, but must be socially situated to serve the needs of communities. Such an objective is accomplished through the use of oral history methods.

With this objective in focus, since the early 20th century, academic and public history has begun to focus on recovering the memories of marginalised peoples such as working classes, women, black people, migrants and other subordinate groups. While this has transformed the very process of writing history, it also has been instrumental in transforming people's lives ushering in cultural democracy (Jordan 2010). Migrants are a marginalised people who arrive into a new country and find themselves as 'people without representation' except through the 'gaze' of the 'native' population (Fanon 2008). As they hardly occupy any position of power in society they often enter into the national discourses as marginal or negative elements perceived as unwanted job-snatchers, asylum seekers or benefit or health tourists and suffer greatly from lack of appropriate representation. The South Asians, despite their presence in the UK for over several centuries and their contribution to the national life and culture that is quite evident throughout this period, their presence in the national narrative is often negligible or negative (Visram 2002). Despite being so, today, due to the availability of the media, they can find their voice within the structures of the nation-state when it is recovered through their memories by the use of oral history narrative (Yow 1994). This is important because, despite arguments about the diminishing role of the nation-states, the nation-state still wields enormous power over people and offers structures that still serve communities to achieve justice and development better than any other that humanity has been able to evolve.

Hence, the following section will extensively discuss how memory needs to be understood, how it differs from and challenges the traditional way of writing history, and the manner in which it contributes to an inclusive historical understanding. Further, I will discuss how memory, which contributes to an inclusive representation of marginalised groups, is also at the root of a community's self-understanding (or, identity) that is so crucial in forming alliances to broaden one's political space in society, especially that which is managed democratically.

### MEMORY: STRUGGLE AGAINST BEING FORGOTTEN

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting," says Milan Kundera, the Czech novelist, in his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979). He speaks of the role memory played in the face of the repressive totalitarianism that forcefully tried to erase history of various peoples in Europe. Such struggle has achieved greater importance in the last few decades and, hence, there has been serious emphasis on the virtue of remembering. This is obviated by recent historical events, such as the Holocaust and the Partition of countries such as India. In India, where people suffered great violence during and after the partition, the official history finds it too painful to own up what had happened as it was shameful. Hence, in order to confront the dominant narratives surrounding the official accounts or the official amnesia of the events, it has become an ethical necessity to preserve the testimonies of survivors and the sufferers. In the case of victims of traumatic experiences it has been recommended that they are helped to speak out about their painful past so that they can come to accept some sane way of dealing with life. When they speak the unspeakable, it has a therapeutic value from the personal point of view of the sufferer and an ethical value from the socio-political point of view of society that needs to reconcile with its past and restore social order (Herman 1992). Viewed from this perspective, forgetting, for whatever reason it happens, can be treated as an attack on the reliability of memory. Hence, remembering becomes a continuous struggle against forgetting (Ricoeur 2004).

However, neither all remembering nor all forgetting is healthy. There are certain things that need remembering, but there are others that need forgetting if humanity has to go on as a sane society. From Nietzsche's point of view a happy life is possible without remembrance and human life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetting (Nietzsche 1980). He was arguing against an excessive emphasis on archival and monumental history proposing the selective use of memory as an "alternative to the discourses of an objectifying and legitimizing history and as a cure to the pathologies of modern life" (Huyssen 1995: 6). While many psychological studies confirm Nietzsche's view, the issue remains as to what is healthy to remember and what is best forgotten; who should have the power to make societies and individuals remember or forget, and what? This issue, once again, hinges on the power that a group wields over other groups or individuals. When we view these arguments, one needs to think of migrants who often are forced to forget the past (of colonialism, indentured labour, slavery, racism, War on Terror, forced partitions etc.) so that they can assimilate or integrate into the new communities despite the forced baggage of history that they carry with them. In such coercive contexts the preservation and recovery of memory is nothing but a struggle against all forms of repressive forgetting forced upon them against their will and interest in the form of repressive erasure, structural amnesia, planned obsolescence and humiliated silence. Such erasures are often forced upon society or groups by states, totalitarian regimes, capitalist market forces or civil societies in order to avoid facing a painful past or a criminal present (Connerton 2011).

Post-independence historiography in India is quite illustrative of this exercise in erasure. For the past six to seven decades the statist Indian historiography failed to represent Partition violence, especially the violence suffered by women, children and the Dalits, not to mention that which is experienced by refugees and the displaced. This repressive erasure or structural amnesia is well illustrated by Gyanendra Pandey who argues that, the history of modern India is predominantly the history of the Independence Movement, Muslim Divisive Movement and Independence gained from the British. This historical narrative perceives communal riots, violence, loss of

property, destruction of community and abduction of women as mere aberrations. It does not legitimately belong to the 'unity in diversity' narrative that the new nation and state needed for survival and nation-building in the post-war geo-political international order (Pandey 2001). The situation of Dalit women in India, raped and further threatened by the perpetrators in order to silence them, and the Tamils defeated in Sri Lanka in the war of 2009, having been prohibited from erecting any memorials to their dead, are typical examples of humiliated silence.

In order to fight against such imposition of power that forces erasure of memory, a great deal of emphasis is being placed in the past few decades on the role of memories in redefining and reshaping the self-understanding of individuals, groups and societies. The rediscovery of the role of memory in shaping peoples' and groups' lives has highlighted the need to study the precise process as to how collective memory is able to shape a discourse or disposition in people. While forgetting certain types of memories is good for the individual and groups or society at large, certain memories are required to be kept alive as an ethical imperative (Hirsch 2008). Those memories which are forcefully or negligently erased have to be recovered and oral history acts as a powerful tool in this effort.

However, despite its noble objective of finding a rightful place in history with justice, the privileging of memory has its own limitations because of the complexity of how memory works (Huyssen 2003). This raises an important question: How does one understand memory and what way of understanding it helps in countering dominant narratives and providing discursive space for egalitarian living? The following section will discuss the way of understanding memory as a useful technique or tool to challenge official history/narratives.

## UNDERSTANDING MEMORY

On the physiological level, memory is a neuro-physiological system which helps animals (humans included) learn from their experience. Scientific and medical investigations focus on the neurological and programmable aspects of memory. Even

philosophical approaches from Plato, Aristotle and others until the 1920s assumed that memory was a process by which one collected and recollected information in time and used mostly for the rhetorical purposes of knowing and understanding (Ricoeur 2004). However, with research made in several social sciences, memory is understood as a matter of experience, recollection, communication and social interaction. These insights are owed to French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who showed that our memory depends on socialization and communication and, therefore, it can be analysed as a function of our group living. For him memory is at the root of group formation, and living in groups, in turn, generates memories that enable us to form our identities as individuals and groups (Assmann 2008b). Moreover, through its deployment memory groups and communities are able to question the discourses that had formed the foundation of their identities historically and the manner in which such perceptions have affected them as individuals and groups (Hirsch 2008). Hence, a detailed understanding of the nature and functioning of collective memory is essential.

## COLLECTIVE MEMORY

As mentioned already, after the posthumous publication of Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1992), scholars generally agree that memory should neither be understood as a mere storage system of any kind nor merely as a complex, neuro-physiological process that allows us to recall whatever is stored from the past. Halbwachs decisively dismissed biological theories of memory that had dominated until the early decades of the 20th century and argued in favour of a cultural framework of interpretation, suggesting that our memories are socially constructed. While the neuro-physiological processes are undoubtedly necessary as a capacity to conserve and retrieve information, focussing on the analysis of these processes alone is not enough to explain the formation of certain fields of knowledge and memory (Assmann 2008). It is here, as against philosophical approaches that focussed on the properties of individual mind, that Halbwachs' seminal views on memory as both an individual and social phenomenon makes sense (Olick 1999).

For Halbwachs (1992) “(I)t is in society that people normally acquire their memories.” It is also in society that “they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (p38). This means, it is impossible to remember without the help of the group or its culture to which one belongs. Memories people have are not merely personal, but primarily social and collective because our greatest memories are those that are received through our families, especially in early childhood. All organisations and institutions or associations one is part of act as social contexts to remember the past. Hence, it is in this sense that there is a social framework in collective memory (Halbwachs 1992). Though collective memory is an outcome of group interaction, actual remembering is done by individuals. It implies that there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions that remember. This aspect of memory opens up the possibility of multiplicity of memory narratives and, consequently, the possibility of multiple interpretations of social reality. The view that memories are neither uniform nor uncontested even within any given groups, acts as a deterrence against holding stereotypical view of individual and collective identities that define them once for all. This argument will be furthered at length in later chapters discussing migrant identities and multiculturalism.

Considering the issue of the recollection of memories by individuals and groups, Halbwachs argues that recollection takes place in the present context where people recall what they value as relevant to their present situation. It is because, people construct their past depending on how such past can serve their present objectives (Halbwachs 1992). Hence, memory and its relationship to the past can and does change according to the needs of individuals or groups at the present depending upon how they want to construct a future. In other words, memories are not static representations of the past providing individuals and communities with permanent identities but they are like 'advancing stories' through which individuals and communities continually construct and reconstruct their sense of identity. It is for this reason one could argue that memories are heavily edited versions of the self and its world (Caldicott and Fuchs 2003). This implies that memories act as an aspect of

continuity in the life of individuals and groups, transforming themselves according to the self-image or identity they wish to construct at a particular time of their life. Functioning in this way, collective memory acts as a marker of group differentiation which constantly keeps evolving (Olick 1999).

The above argument can be illustrated quite clearly in the case of South Asian migrants to the UK. Given their historic experience as a colonised people with the memories of a repressive British rule and struggle against such rule until gaining independence in 1947, South Asian migrants often have painful and confrontational memories of the British rule. However, having chosen to migrate to the centre of that very colonial power, they needed to work with their memories and create narratives that facilitate their life in the UK. In such a context recollection of memories would have to fall in line with their present and future needs of belonging there. For this reason, it would be interesting to find out through oral history interviews, what form their narrative would take now as public expression.

#### MULTIPLE, FRAGMENTED MEMORIES

The discussion so far has focussed on collective memory of groups providing individuals with social frameworks to remember and recall the past. This discussion appears to consider memories of groups as monolithic in nature, giving the impression of being essentialist in providing group identities. Even though groups can be identified as cultural units, every group is heterogeneous and has dissenting members with varying interests such as class, caste, gender, religion, language, place etc. So, while treating group memories as social frameworks, one cannot ignore the fragmented and multiple nature of group memory.

Moreover, in today's postmodern, postcolonial situation, it is difficult to find such a monolithic form of collective memory which once was the domain of religion and had a prescriptive dimension with its emphasis on sacred and ceremonial function. But, in the secular and democratic ordering of societies, collective memory is fragmented in

different minority groups who attempt to legitimise their cultural identities by having recourse to the wealth of cultural memory that constituted their group (Hall 1996).

Understanding the multiple and fragmented nature of memory is very crucial if one were to consider South Asians as a category in the multicultural social context of Britain. Despite having a unique and traumatic history of Partition along with the happy memories of gaining independence, they also share a common history of colonial rule and its effects on several generations of South Asian migrants, whether they migrated directly from South Asia, East Africa or elsewhere. However, the memories of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, Christians or other groups are not uniform in nature; all memories seem to be unique and community-specific. This aspect of their group experience will affect how they perceive themselves and others while living in the context of South Asia itself and wherever they migrate to. The fractured nature of their memory also impacts on their relationship with each other in the UK and elsewhere. To shed some light on how this dynamic works, the following discussion will focus on the understanding of identity and how it relates to memory. This will give a deeper dimension to later discussions about South Asian identity and British multicultural practices.

### MEMORY, COMMUNITY, IDENTITY

The issue of identity can be approached from various perspectives: philosophical, psychological, sociological, political, cultural etc. When we think of the concept of identity, it gives the impression of something tangible, continuous and permanent. Such sense of permanence is expressed in common sense perspectives that people have and through the prevalent frames of generalisations, stereotypes or prejudices that people entertain about themselves and others. But, when one analyses the concept further, it becomes clear, as Ruth Wodak observes, “identity is a relational term. It defines the relationship between two or more related entities in a manner that asserts a sameness or equality” (Wodak 2009: 11). The collective identities, however, are generally conceived against what is not ‘us’. The relational nature of identity keeps



evolving continuously. In reality, what an individual experiences is constant change (Shoemaker 1998). Neither a living being nor an inanimate being such as a stone remains the same over a period of time. They constantly undergo change. Against such an experience, the concept of identity, which has a sense of permanence, appears to be a contradiction in terms and escapes any clear definition (Brah 1996).

John Locke had argued that our personal identity consists, “not in the sameness of substance, but in 'sameness of consciousness'” (See Shoemaker 1998: 301). According to this view the identity of a person consists in his or her capacity to remember. It is the same person who experienced the event in the past and can recall it in the present. This makes memory central to one’s identity (Shoemaker 1998). While this refers to the unique nature of individual beings, identity formation involves a process of recognising the other as different from oneself. That happens in the context of living in society where one interacts with others on individual and institutional levels. Hence, what and who we are is a result of these interactions and, therefore, it can change depending on the social context and the level of intimacy possible in interactions within this social context.

Engaging with change and encounter with ‘others’ could produce anxiety and destabilization in life too. In order to experience some permanence, people resort to constructing fixed narratives of the self which can be termed essentialist determining of ‘who I am’. It is here that our memories weave the past with the present for constructing the future, offering continuity to individuals as well as to groups or communities (Halbwachs 1992). Individuals are members of various ethnic, religious, cultural, professional, national, transnational or even global communities. Referring to the process of identity construction Bhikhu Parekh (2008: 9) says: “[T]hey define and distinguish themselves, and are defined and distinguished by others, in terms of one or more of these”. This kind of human belonging and self-understanding, ensuing from their social interactions, is often called their social identity.

Individuals, especially in today's world, have various identities depending on the groups, communities, religious or political affiliations they choose. These affinities or identifications, in turn, are engendered by multifarious collective memories. If post-enlightenment, modernist philosophy harboured essentialist notions of the subject, globalised, post-modernist thought has freed us from such essentialist understandings of the subject. Instead, today we understand our subjecthood or identity to be *a discursive construction* (Hall 1996). In this process of discursivity, to assume various subjective positions, one falls back on to one's memories. The ensuing discursive negotiation, taking place based on the subjective positions one assumes, enables one to take up an identity. Talking about the role of memory here Assmann would argue: "[M]emory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level. Identity, in its turn, is related to time" (Assmann 2008: 109). As an individual, as a member of a group, community or nation, memory serves as knowledge of oneself over time. Groups get formed, maintained or dissolved depending on the dynamics of association or dissolution which are ruled by varying degrees of affinity. Hence, remembering becomes an obligation because it is the foundation of one's belonging. "One has to remember in order to belong" (Assmann 2008: 114). This phenomenon, the need to embrace collective memory, becomes starker when the self and its identity are threatened.

In the context of South Asian migrants in the UK, whom I interviewed for my research, one could notice how, for the first generation of migrants who arrived after the partition of India, memories of Partition formed an important aspect of their story of migration which, however, is not the case with the second generation South Asians. And when considering the memories of migrants from East Africa, it is not the Partition but their being forced out of East Africa, and the insecurities of leaving everything behind and migrating to an unknown place, form their chief memories. These memories shape their identities based on which they have been able to form communities in Britain. However, for many second and third generation migrants their parents' or grandparents' memories do not shape their current realities as my data analysis suggests.

In the case of migrant communities the cultural memories of their groups act as nodes of identity in unfamiliar, and sometimes, hostile settings as already mentioned. When these memories help them form communities, such identities also act as organising spheres for socio-political action. These could be temporary or long-term alliances based on social, political or economic objectives of individuals and groups.

To illustrate the point, one could cite the example of South Asians, Caribbeans, Africans and other minority groups, at a particular juncture of their existence in the UK, coming together to fight racism and exclusion as 'postcolonial' or as Black subjects. In such an alignment they would deploy their collective memory as *colonised* peoples. However, in other circumstances South Asians would not identify themselves as Black. This unity under the collective memory of colonialism would not work as a marker of identity when Muslims join together to protest against issues affecting their religion, though South Asian identity would come into play when they join to protest against British government joining the USA for its war against Iraq. So, the use of memory to form alliances indicates how collective memory of groups can work strategically as a marker of identity, illustrating the utilitarian use of collective memory.

Another important feature of collective memory is that memories are often linked to geographical locations and specific times in the life of a group's history. Memories and their recollection bring to the fore the role played by space (or, place) and time as experienced by people. Halbwachs (1992) devotes special attention to this relationship between memory and place. The very term 'South Asian' refers to a group of people in the UK who are identified by their geographical origin which also forms part of their diaspora character. Hence, a discussion as to how place functions as an identity marker is important as the South Asians, despite their history of religious and national conflicts, are ready to assume their identity based on the place of their origin as my interview data suggests.

## MEMORY, SPACE, IDENTITY

Halbwachs (1992) talks about how the space that we inhabit impacts on our life and how this impact also plays a role in the manner in which we remember and recall our past. More importantly, he insists that the milieu that we construct as personal or family space, which we call home, is a direct outcome of the group culture that we are surrounded with. The specific or unique way of organising space with specific choice of objects and the manner of their presentation represents a group culture rather than just individual eccentricities. To put it in another way, every environment that is inhabited by individuals is marked by the habits and thought processes of their group, exhibiting their unique identity. The people who inhabit a particular space and the space that they inhabit mutually impact and transform each other engendering what is called 'milieu effects', an affective territory which we call home. It is a place of comfort against irritations, permanence against flux, familiar against the uncanny. The objects that we place within this territory have great affective resonance to those who construct and inhabit that space. This process of territorializing space or 'constructing home' is an act of culture as Wise would argue:

The resonance of milieus and territories are cultural in that the specific expression of an object or space will be differentially inflected based on culture. Culture is meaning-making, and so the meaning-effects of the aggregate of what I am calling one's markers (one's personal effects) reflect [.....] cultures. Cultures are ways of territorializing, the ways one makes oneself at home (Wise 2000: 299-300).

If home is a cultural expression, then it is much more than a self-expression of an individual subject. The subject, instead, is a product of a culture which, in turn, is an outcome of interactions and relationships happening within that culture. This process provides specific ways of living and viewing the world forming the foundation of a particular identity (Wise 2000). Corroborating Halbwachs' ideas that space is socially inhabited and culturally constructed, Wise (2000) insists that identities that are linked with spatial markings are not just individual but primarily social and collective.

Consequently, the memories that individuals have are spatially bound resulting in their recollection with the space and territory that they are associated with at a particular time.

The exact role played by spatial images in collective memory is summarised by Halbwachs (1980) thus:

The place a group occupies is not like a blackboard, where one may write and erase figures at will. [.....]. But place and group have each received the imprint of the other. Therefore every phase of the group can be translated into spatial terms, and its residence is but the juncture of all these terms. Each aspect, each detail, of this place has a meaning intelligent only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it (p 2)

This relationship alters with the alteration in the nature of that space impacted upon it by the event(s) that happen at different times. When such events are of extraordinary nature they occasion an intense awareness of the group's past and present. The bonds attaching the group to physical space gets greater clarity especially if the place is destroyed due to wars, natural calamities or vandalism. Such traumatic events also alter a group's relationship to that place even affecting the collective memory itself (Halbwachs 1992).

This fact is especially illustrated by migrant experiences. Migrants' relationship to the place that they left behind always impinges on their memories as one can notice from the experiences of the South Asian migrants to the UK. Those that arrived after the Partition often refer to the village and community life that was destroyed by Partition and those that arrived from East Africa often refer to their home, village, the shop or school that they had to leave behind. They always identify themselves with the place that they left behind. Hence, space and place that sustain their memories have a direct

bearing on their identities as Wise (2000: 301) declares: “Identity is territory”. But territory does not refer to a once for all fixed location where one locates one’s roots. But it also refers to the territory that we mark through our journeys and arrivals. These are territories that are territorialised by our repetitive marking and made familiar over time; in other words, it is where we construct our ‘home’, our ‘identities’ (Wise 2000). It is for this reason that one can talk about multiple belongings and identities.

This point at issue explains the fact that various groups of migrants have multiple collective memories of the places they come from and the causes that brought them to the UK. Besides the above, the collective memories of a South Asian migrant born in East Africa with little connection with any place in South Asia would be markedly different from someone who came directly from South Asia after the Partition. The same can be said about those who arrived from South India and West Pakistan. Not all have the collective memories of Partition or postcolonial India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. This again goes to caution one against treating collective memories in an essentialist, monolithic fashion lumping together all South Asians under a reified category of ‘South Asian Migrant’, an argument I will engage in later while discussing migrant identities. In fact, some of the East African migrants of South Asian roots object to their being categorised as South Asian as they have no territorial connection or experience with South Asia (Murji 2008).

Space (or, place) is not a void or abstract conception. It becomes intimate and loaded with emotive affect when that space is populated with objects which are of cultural value and whose acquisition or possession is determined by group culture. People’s memories of objects and the significance of these in their life also bind them to specific identities. How it happens is discussed in the following section.

### PLACE, OBJECTS, MEMORY

When humans occupy a place they mark a milieu through the use and possession of objects which have utilitarian and symbolic value. This is specially so where we spend

much of our time: for work, for leisure or comfort. We organise this space with artefacts and objects that are significant for us. They help us remember people, places and events and there is a cultural logic in the way we choose, preserve or display such objects. In Alan Radley's words, "[...] the sphere of material objects is ordered in ways upon which we rely for a sense of continuity and as markers of temporal change" (Radley 1990: 46). The artefacts that decorate our places are reminders of a past that is personally and socially significant in life. Moreover, the realm of objects in our life bears evidence to their group significance.

As Radley further argues, "how and what we remember is also objectified in material forms which are sometimes (but not always) arranged to embody categories ... indicating how, specifically, they are implicated in how people go about establishing their individual and collective pasts" (Radley 1990: 47). This is because significant objects accumulated and possessed with care 'establish a link with the past' and act as a marker of identity. Generally it is often their ordinariness, "coupled with the circumstances of their acquisition that enables the owner to indulge in particularly pleasurable forms of remembering" (Radley 1990: 47). Quite often such objects end up in public places like museums and community centres such as town halls, churches or temples. When such objects are approached by people in another epoch they evoke a 'sense of their time and place'. They may not recall particular events of the past in detail though they get a sense of the past as people of the time lived and experienced. In this way they become expressions of a culture embodying the myths and ideologies of a section of people in that society (Radley 1990). The role of artefacts such as photographs, clothes, religious pictures, cutlery etc. play a very important role in the case of post-memory where these artefacts could act as cues and contexts for recollecting the past by later generations (Hirsch and Spitzer 2006). For the successive generations of the group these objects, besides constituting collective memory, function as markers of identity. The presence of such objects in public spaces acts as an intervention into the larger collective memory narratives of the nation.

Taking into consideration the multicultural nature of modern societies transformed by the effects of globalization and migration, the discussion has focussed on how and why the traditional, historical narratives fail to be inclusive of all sections of people comprising the national community. Identifying the limitations of the archive as the sole source I have proposed how memory can be employed constructively to make the national narratives inclusive and more representative. This is possible because memory operates as a social framework providing identity and continuity to groups and enables groups to construct diverse and contesting narratives. Now, the final question that remains to be addressed is about the relationship between memory and history. How are they related to each other? What is the nature of their contribution to understand the past as well as the present of groups? The following discussion focuses on this debate.

### MEMORY-HISTORY RELATIONSHIP

Halbwachs (1992) makes a sharp distinction between historical and autobiographical memory. He sees an intimate link between individual and collective memory as they interpenetrate one another, though it is not the same with history. Historical memory, according to him, impacts on people through written and other types of records and is kept alive by commemorations, but autobiographical memory is the memory of events personally experienced by people. While historical memory usually comes to people through mediation, autobiographical memory is shaped by one's interaction with others in groups which provide the social frameworks to remember (Halbwachs 1992). Building on Halbwachs' frame, Paul Ricoeur (2004) suggests that, while living memory is continuous, history introduces discontinuity by using periodization and categorisation proper to historical knowledge. He adds that while there are several collective memories, history is unitary in nature with the nation being the major reference point, a grand narrative is produced for legitimising the memories of the dominant groups, especially the ruling classes. In this way, history makes it impossible to relive the past as it is no longer a dynamic group memory but, being propagated



through state sanctioned institutions, it is a mediated memory of dominant, vocal or hegemonic groups.

If in traditional societies this mediation took place by way of religio-cultural rituals, in modern societies this historical mediation takes various forms which are called 'sites of memory' that come into being at particular stages of group history. These sites of memory act as nodes of individual, group or national identity. Due to the ideological implications of the processes of archiving and unarchiving as discussed already it is at these sites history ends up being reified and non-representative. This manner of constructing sites of memory illustrates the power of the dominant ideology and the contested nature of memory due to which those sites often remain controversial and their legitimacy contested. According to Pierre Nora (1989) *Lieux de memoire* (or, 'sites of memory') come into being when identities are threatened; otherwise there would be no need to build them. Obviously, it doesn't mean that all threatened identities get to construct memory sites for various reasons such as the position of power they come to occupy within the national community. For Nora what we call memory, or sites of memory, today is already history, a rationalised, distilled part of memory, reconstructed for a certain purpose, often by the state and in that it is in opposition to real memory (Nora 1989). Therefore, comparing and contrasting memory and history Nora concludes that history is antithetical to memory. In modern times, the excessive emphasis on positive, rational history-writing at the expense of memory is termed as the "conquest and eradication of memory by history". It is because the distance between memory and history has been so stretched that the bond of identity between the two comes to be broken. This makes history perpetually suspicious of memory.

However, there are others who see a relational role between memory and history. Etymologically, *Mnemosyne* refers to the Greek goddess of memory, who was also the mother of history. Hence, memory and history belong together and account for the same phenomenon: the representation of a group's past. Accordingly, for authors such as Natalie Zemon and Randolph Starn (1989) memory is multiform and situated in time and place making it history or histories. Memory gives us unembellished truths or tells

uncritical tales. Such multiplicity of memories will also help in loosening the stranglehold of rational history and opening up multiple ways of seeing a group or a nation. As the presence of multiple individual and collective memories implies multiform of a collective memory, denying its monolithic character, so too the presence of many groups with multiple collective memories makes it impossible to construct a monolithic collective memory of a nation. This fact not only points towards the acknowledgment of multiple memories but also contributes towards the inevitability of multiple identities with multiple histories assumed by various groups within communities and nation-states. Recognising this fact provides a very strong argument for the adoption of multiculturalism as a state policy, an issue I will discuss in the subsequent chapters.

Hence, memory and history must be taken as complementary in understanding the past. That is why memories relating to a site are often multiple, overlapping and colliding in monuments of history. The collision of memories points to the fact that memory can challenge the biases, omissions, exclusions, generalisations, and abstractions of history. Local memories are sources for writing local histories ignored by historians of dynastic monarchy and the nation-state. The private sphere and practices of everyday life define and conserve alternatives to the official memory of public historiography. Hence, memory and history are to be seen as interdependent. One can, then, conclude with Dominick LaCapra (1998) that a critically informed memory helps to determine what in history is worth preserving as living tradition. At the same time, a critically informed history can question and test memory to determine what is empirically accurate and significant. This, especially, is the case, as Michel Foucault (1980) notes, when memory acts as counter-memory and functions as the residual or resistant strain that withstands official versions of historical continuity. This point is well illustrated by the works of Urvasi Butalia (2000), Menon and Bhasin (1998), Gyanendra Pandey (2001) and others in the case of Indian Partition history where recovering the memories of those who were neglected by the official history has contributed towards a fuller understanding of the reality of Indian Partition.

## CONCLUSION

When nation-states were assumed to have people of a single ethnicity and culture historical narratives were constructed about a people and their nation(s), they are done despite the fact that a number of lesser or alien ethnicities already existed within the national space. However, such illusion of singular identities were created through the skilful cultivation of violent means by those groups that vied for power and dominance (Sen 2007). In such grand narratives only the dominant ethnos is assumed to possess a great genius to create this particular nation where a kind of politics of history is perpetuated in which the minorities and others hardly find due representation ((Appadurai 2006). In the past, this was accepted as normal where all minority group interests were expected, and quite often forced, to be subsumed under the grand narratives produced to serve the majority interests. However, such a taken-for-granted situation has changed markedly in recent decades, thanks to the changing nature of societies and the importance memory has come to occupy in public, media and historical discourses. Not only has this dealt a blow to the truth value of the grand, national narratives, but it also has brought legitimacy to multiple narratives from groups that could now represent themselves through the deployment of their collective memories. Furthermore, it has led to a realisation that persons, communities or nations can have more than one identity and more than one group can have multiple identities and that several particular identities can coexist within a universal identity such as a nation. All this has been made possible through the acceptance of memory as a legitimate source for representing their past by groups that lacked historical symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2011).

The same tool is also useful in recovering the memories of migrants, minorities or persons and groups that are deprived of a voice in the public sphere. In view of providing voice to South Asian migrants in the UK, and in order to inscribe their presence in the societies of their settlement, their memories of migration and settlement play an important role in reconstructing their history. The following chapters will focus on their narratives culled out of their memories and will try to construct a story that would make their identities to be a part of the British national narrative.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ORAL HISTORY AND RECOLLECTION OF MEMORIES

*"By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account."*

- Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*

### INTRODUCTION

In critiquing the limitations of professional history-writing depending exclusively upon official sources and documented archives, even as recently as the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, I have argued that it was the prerogative of the ruling or elite classes to be located in the archives. Ordinary people such as women and various minorities, especially those who were on the periphery of the dominant, national narratives, (or, the South Asian immigrants in UK in my research), were not considered as legitimate subjects of official archives. When they were referred to in the official sources, it was done as groups that needed containment or consignment as observed by Foucault, Derrida and historians of Subaltern Studies (Guha 1988). Lacking official or authoritative sources to construct their legitimate role in history such marginalised groups had to fall back upon other sources. Memory was picked up as one such alternative source that could contribute towards the construction of alternative narratives complementing as well as questioning dominant or official sources and historical narratives.

Memory being the property of individuals and groups, constructing historical narratives with the use of memory narratives can be treated as a process of democratising historical narratives (Thompson 2003). Hence, the use of memory as an alternative source is recognised as most fitting to the democratic nature of societies which are plural in every sense, multicultural in composition and diverse in their interpretation of events. Recognising the diversity of communities that characterise Britain, old and monolithic narratives constructed on visions of ethnic or religious homogeneity are not considered inclusive of minority communities that have come to contribute significantly to the national life in various ways: cultural, economic and

social (Ranasinha 2013a). However, such narratives are difficult to construct through the exclusive use of archival sources as these communities lacked power and influence which are necessary in order to be part of such a process of recognition (Trouillot 1995). So, it is necessary to tap into their memory resources for narratives of their migration, settlement and their manner of belonging to the national community.

In order to do so oral history interview method has been employed as an effective means by many researchers and community workers since the last few decades (Thompson 2003, Yow 1995, Jordan 2010). Valuing the wealth of unique data that it can provide and employing robust techniques to analyse the data, I have employed this method, in my research, to record the memory narratives of South Asian immigrants to South Wales (in UK).

Some amount of historical research based on archival sources has been done in recent decades to illustrate the long history of South Asians' presence in the UK and the rich contribution they have made to British life and history (Visram 2002, Ranasinha 2013, Brah 1996). However, the narratives are constructed predominantly based on the archival sources established through the records produced by the colonial bureaucracy through reports and diaries of administrative officials, missionaries and literary writers. As a result, such narratives very often view South Asians from the perspective of the colonial administration or the present day state institutions. Recently, however, Ranasinha and a group of researchers (2013), Yasmin Khan (2015), Raghu Karnad (2015) and others while making use of such archival sources, have departed from an exclusive reliance on archives and written documents, and constructed their narratives by tapping into peoples' memories through interviews. Their work was a corrective that emerged from their own experience of being subjected to narratives about South Asian immigrants as economic migrants, intruders and benefit scroungers. As against such a backdrop of negative narratives, theirs was an effort to construct counter narratives based on the facts of centuries long presence of South Asians in the UK (not merely as economic migrants but also as students, professionals, investors, statesmen etc.) and their contributions as immigrants as well

as colonial subjects to the life and history of Britain (Visram 2013). My research objective is to add to these efforts of constructing a counter narrative against the dominant, xenophobic discourses about immigrants but with special reference to South Asians in Britain today. Such a counter-narrative is produced in the context of and against the ravages of globalization and neoliberalism in the West, especially in Great Britain.

My focus will exclusively rely on recovering memory narratives from two generations of South Asian migrants currently settled in South Wales. As already mentioned, according to the 2011 UK census figures, of the over 3 million South Asians presently living in the UK, 21,884 live in Wales (0.8% of the 3.1 million people living in Wales). Most of them live in South Wales; especially in Cardiff city. This makes South Wales a valid representative in UK of South Asian immigrant population. This is also the reason why I have chosen this area as the focus of my research. (Moreover, being a resident of this area for little over a decade, I have been a part of this community and have been sharing their migrant experiences myself). I intend to do oral history by employing interview method which is most suitable in my context as it requires meeting people face to face and recording their memory-narratives (Yow 1994).

Some theoretical issues that help us understand the importance and the value of memory narratives in researching migrant life could be usefully repeated here in brief and examine the strengths and weaknesses of doing oral history by interview method. I'll briefly explain how I actually did the interviews and analysed them to arrive at certain generalisations. I conclude this section with a reassertion of my faith in this method of collecting and analysing data, reviewing the problems, both practical and ethical, and thereby make this research robust and reliable.

## ORAL HISTORY: PEOPLES' LIFE IN NARRATIVE

Oral history research is an interview-based method that works with people's memory and the manner in which people recount their lived experiences. It is a method that

constructs narratives which recount the ways in which their lives intersected with historical events. In a way, it is a personalised account but, since memory operates with social frames, it is also a collective memory narrative (Ricoeur 2004). Such interviews can produce valuable data that can help a community to understand the past differently than the received narratives (Chowdhury 2014). As Thompson argues, “Oral history is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people” (Thompson 2003: 28). As already discussed earlier, the purpose of this approach is to construct alternative narratives from ordinary people’s life experience and the stories of their struggle to make things happen to their families and communities, rendering them legitimate part of larger narratives that represent the national and democratic community.

However, one needs to understand the specific nature of oral narratives constructed within the unconscious frame of mind operating within class, caste, language, region and gender and the structure of the narrative genre employed therein—all of which exhibit specific if not unique characteristics. In most societies in the past and among some even today, the lower classes or castes are not literate and had relied on oral narratives in the preservation and transmission of their collective memory. Oral history narratives, by being different in their nature as against the written sources, can gain access to such memory and contribute uniquely towards understanding the past. According to Alessandro Portelli the key difference that oral history introduces into historical research is that “[I]t tells us less about events as such than about their meaning. This does not imply that oral history has no factual interest; interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events, and they always cast new light on unexplored sides of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes” (Portelli 198: 99). In these narratives the very narrative plot and narrative structure of sequencing of events is unique because of the peculiar nature of the subject’s or group’s concerns and how the events themselves affected them differently due to their class or caste positioning. As Portelli further argues, “The organisation of the narrative [...] reveals a great deal of the speakers’ relationship to their own history” (Portelli

1981: 100). This aspect makes the narrative unique and reflects the individual's collective identity. Not the events or facts the narrator refers to, but his relationship to these events or facts becomes purposeful discourse. For this reason, it is an alternative view of institutionally produced history.

### NARRATIVE-IDENTITY INTERACTION

In this context we need to understand that memories and narratives play a key role in the construction of individual as well as group identities. Narratives could range from ancient myths (Bruner 1959) to today's Bollywood or Hollywood movies where people try to make sense of their lives (construct identities) through narratives. As McAdams argues: "[I]dentity is a life story," a life story being a personal myth woven by an individual to "provide his or her life with unity or purpose" (McAdams, 1993: 5). It is a myth because it is "an act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present, and anticipated future" (McAdams 1993: 12). It stitches together disparate elements of the self and is continually reconstructed according to various stages of life-experience and the challenges faced, reconciling the permanence of the self with changes over time. The purpose of these narratives is to construct meaning with facts taking a secondary place. It is precisely for this reason that people's stories change over time because they are created to serve their identities at a particular moment with a new interpretation of facts.

Treating McAdams' view of narrative as individualist construction, some postmodern thinkers argue that the self should be seen as relational with a multiplicity of self-accounts without committing to any one narrative account as the 'truth of the self' and accounting for more than one identity position. Gergen and Kaye also argue in the same vein: "The narrative constructions thus remain fluid, open to the shifting tides of circumstance" (Gergen and Kaye 1992: 255). They imply hereby a shift from "individual selves coming together to form a relationship, to one where the relationship takes centre stage, with selves being realised only as a by-product of relatedness." Shifting self-narratives indicate the importance of "varied forms of human connectedness that make up life" (Gergen and Kay 1992: 255). Hence,



multiplicity of narratives with multiple identities is the order of post-modern living. In the life of migrants, their journeys and struggles to belong are nothing but selves in interaction with numerous people, places and situations producing multiple identities. This is proved at every point of interaction with South Asian immigrants [See the interview data in Chapter 5].

Looking at it from the perspective of a life story by narrating the story of one's multiple selves, the individual sees herself as a character in a developing plot which can be altered in time. This open plot leaves the option of integrating changes that could occur in the future as one has to deal with the vicissitudes of life, such as migration, loss etc. Moreover, the narrated self is also a social self because narratives are created out of memories and memories are constructed in a social context as Halbwachs (1992) argues. As already discussed, treating identity as a constructed narrative corroborates further the argument that identity construction is a continuous process. It keeps evolving as one keeps constructing new narratives of the self and the world. Remembering and recollecting one's past in the context of the present to serve the future objectives of life is the process of narrative construction. This precisely is what the migrants do in the process of their struggle to belong. Their story is a narrative that weaves the memories of their journeys, their struggles to set up homes and negotiate with the day to day vicissitudes of migrant life, often, in not-so-friendly circumstances.

Every story generally deals with the past as seen from the perspective of the present, accounting for the role of memory in this process and how memory itself gets affected by this process of narrating. As Nicola King puts it: "[A]ll narrative accounts of life stories ..... are made possible by memory; they also reconstruct memory according to certain assumptions about the way it functions and the kind of access it gives to the past" (King 2000: 2). Her observations are in the context of arguments that memory is like a storehouse available recall stored information uncontaminated versus arguments that memory undergoes continuous revision every time it is evoked in the light of present knowledge and experience. However, for King (2000) it is not only an issue of "how and what individuals remember and how they represent their

memories, but also what might be termed a cultural struggle over the construction and meanings of memory within culture, the ways in which we construct the very means and possibility of remembering” (King 2000: 5). This refers to individuals as well as collectives where power relations determine how memory is viewed and what memories are allowed to surface or remain silent. In the case of trauma one may not be able to revisit the ‘site’ of memory because it is too painful. This works at the level of the individual and the community, or the nation, dealing with a painful history. It leads to selective remembrance where the trauma is not worked through and the scars not healed (Radstone 2007). Moreover, it also refers to power relations within a society where some have the power to make certain memories legitimate but not others (Trouillot 1995). Many memories could remain silent depending upon what narratives are permissible to serve the larger objectives of nation states as demonstrated by Urvashi Butalia (2000) and Menon and Bhasin (1998) in the case of the women who underwent violence, abduction and rape during the Indian Partition in 1947. Through oral history interviews, Butalia, Menon and Bhasin attempt to recuperate such abducted women’s memories and give voice to their experiences in the Partition history India.

The stories that individuals or institutions (or, nations) construct become part of everyday discourse that affects the way an individual, a community and a nation define their identity and their attitudes towards others. With regard to dealing with the phenomenon of immigration, for those who claim to belong to the nation by virtue of their ethnic or cultural affinity, then it is an issue viewed from the point of cultural invasion or resource depletion, and for migrants, their own self-understanding and the terms of their belonging to the nation of their arrival. All this forms part of their narratives. Moreover, their narratives largely depend upon the complex interplay between the memories of their past homeland, memories of their migration, and the struggles that they had to undergo in the process of settling in a new land and a new environment. The case of South Asians is illustrative of such a complex interplay of memories as against the concerns of the existing communities. Their identities are a narrative outcome of their subsequent efforts to fit in or to demand a rightful place in

British democracy as citizens in the context of the media and political discourses, government policies and other day to day experiences (both positive and negative) among the settled people of Britain (Brah 1999).

## MIGRANTS: MEMORIES AND NARRATIVES

Why migrants are a typical group that relies on their memories for construction of communities and identities in the places of their arrival is well illustrated by Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) who argue that, "Migrants, perhaps more than any other people, are made by their memories of their birthplace, their homeland, and the people they left behind-interruptions in their life narratives that require re-sequencing, remodelling and reinterpreting as the newcomers incorporate and surpass their pasts" (p228). In this way and in every way migration is a unique experience and a complex social phenomenon. It is for this reason the oral history narrative data obtained through interviews is seen as a value added material culled from migrants' memory which plays a pivotal role in the emotionally charged process of migration. As already noted by Halbwachs (1992), memory, though an individual and personal phenomenon, is socially structured and "the 'frameworks' that permit and fashion recollection are not merely social but also socially and culturally specific. Without such structures, recollection would be impossible. From this view, memories are not only mediated but also edited (or, censored) according to the available frameworks of representation. This is especially true in the case of migrants who suffer disadvantages of various types limiting the possibilities of representing their memories. Moreover, in the process of adapting themselves to the new environment they are expected to forget the painful experiences and carry on with their new life. Such a demand does not resolve issues of unjust suffering or alienation but only remain as unresolved residues hampering integration into larger national community. As already argued, the resolution lies in finding a rightful place for immigrant narratives in the socio-historical discourses of the nation. In this respect, families are, through their practices and remembering, the storehouses of memory where one needs to look for those living memories (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004).

Where does one have access to the cultural frames that are so essential for remembering and recalling the past? The cultural frames available for representing memories are embedded in the language(s) that we use. (Here language represents the entire cultural apparatus that is part of one's repertoire). The way we represent ourselves, which is an expression of our identity, depends on the tools and frames that are culturally available for recall and to narrate. This is true as much of individuals as of social entities. As the mind requires cultural frames to narrate, an individual will need recourse to various themes to formulate the narrative plot. Often the class, caste, gender, ethnicity etc. are the pre-given conditions that determine the plots and themes of our narratives. Others are chosen from popular culture and according to socio-political demands. In a word, "the extent to which the narratives of the Self conform or fail to conform is the principal mechanism through which a sense of identity is secured, acknowledged and recognized by others" (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004: 230). Migrants have an uphill task to reconcile the cultural frames of their past memory with those that are available for them to represent their memory and identity in an adopted socio-cultural site. However, this complex movement has to happen and the transformation in identity has to evolve if one needs to embrace a new national belonging. If it does not happen, there will be proliferation of ghettos of various cultural communities pitted against one another, sundering the fabric of a national imaginary. Why is this process so vital in the case of South Asians in Britain?

#### SOUTH ASIANS IN THE UK: ARCHIVE, MEMORY, SILENCE

As already mentioned the South Asian presence in Britain is more than four centuries old and their contribution to British life is varied and yet their representation within the British national imaginary is skewed and, at best, negative (Visram 2002). This is especially true in the case of South Asian contributions to British wars, a role which is treated as quintessential to consider anyone as belonging to a nation, not to mention their contribution to other walks of national life. However, until recently, recognition for South Asians' participation in Britain's wars was hardly commendable though an inclusive approach is necessitated by the changed British national ethos of diversified

cultural and ethnic make-up due to a large number of South Asians living in Britain (Stadtler 2013: 100). Why hasn't it happened already?

Basing his arguments on Trouillot's observations, Stadtler (2013) argues that production of dominant historical discourses involves mechanisms of power and silences as already mentioned. In the case of those who have no power within the social structure (such as immigrants or those that are pitted against exploitative or oppressive powers), their presence is accorded a place only as problematic people, revolutionaries, subversives, migrants who do not want to integrate, illegal immigrants who are a drain on resources etc. These mechanisms explain why, despite their presence in the archives, there is silence about such categories of people in the official historical narratives.

According to Trouillot (1995) silences can enter into historical production at four crucial moments: "[T]he moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)" (p 99). Hence, historical narratives contain multiple moments of silence which require deconstructing or reading the sources and archives against the grain (Ranasinha 2013). This shrouding of South Asian contribution needs unveiling through multiple ways. If Ranasinha (2013), Visram (2002) and others have predominantly focussed on archival sources, recording of people's and communities' memory (which, to some extent, they also have employed in their research) is another complementary but also valuable effort which will help in constructing a counter-narrative that can challenge the narrow, white-centred British national narrative. As mentioned earlier oral history interviews is the real research method that could yield rich dividend in my research.

## MIGRANT EXPERIENCE: A MULTI-LAYERED NARRATIVE

Oral history interviews are multi-layered documents in the form of narrative and, as a result, subject to the same forms and controls as applied to the process of constructing and analysing any typical narratives. Being dialogical, here, text construction is an open process where the derived content depends on the kind of questions asked and the motives and the narrative frames employed by the subject. Since it is an open process, one finds the subject narrating what is of importance to her rather than what the interviewer would look for (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004). It is in an oral history interview “both the self and memory engage in a constant dialectic” (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004: 232), that is to say, in the process of interviewing the choice of events recalled or not recalled can weave into a plot depending on what is important to the subject at the time of the interview. However, as oral history narratives are expressions of one’s culturally lived experience, careful attention can provide a glimpse into the cultural priorities and values along which “a deeper understanding of an informant’s location in history” is explained (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, (2004: 232).

South Asians, as a group, are a heterogeneous community. How they deal with their memories is constantly affected by these communities’ mutual engagement not only in places where they live but also how their respective communities engage with one another in the UK as well as back in South Asia. Day to day developments back home, especially the communal conflicts within nations or border conflicts between South Asian nations, could affect how they weave the narratives from their memories. The antagonisms of the past and present, their present perceptions of the world and how the world perceives and treats them affect the way they remember and recall the things. Their narratives will undergo change depending on their response to the present day media discourses about immigration, terrorism of Islamic fundamentalists or Hindutva violence against minorities in India. This is what is meant by a subject’s location in history and its role in memory and its recollection.

Migrants' stories are especially revealing here as their experience of migration continues beyond their arrival into a new country in the form of struggles to belong, the differences in outlook between generations, and due to the need to organise one's life spanning across continents. In this process, "migrant memories may disclose the tensions often experienced between the old and the new, in which both nostalgic and critical memory plays a role" (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004: 232-233). In this way, migrant life stories are a very important mirror for the ways in which they have lived this experience and made sense of the effects of such movements. The issues revolve around the very journey, the early experiences of being in an alien land of hostile weather, queer looks, struggles to find jobs and places to rent, not to mention having to put up with racist jibes, contrasting them at the same time with the pleasant experiences of helpfulness from the British people and the state.

As for transnational families, due to their spread across nations and as a result of their physical dislocation and the "fluidities of transnational communications," it is difficult to construct physically a sense of place and belonging, which are "more often than not located in the imaginary and in memory" (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004: 233). Their sense of belonging and imaginary unity is centred on family which is the source of their identity where family stories play an important role. Hence, the oral history interview techniques offer a multi-layered representation of individuals and communities that very often provide a different view from dominant representations of social realities. Besides the above, these multi-layered narratives can also provide valuable insights into the complex nature of migrant belonging, an issue which continually dominates media discourses in the context of Muslim fundamentalism in Western countries and immigrant population in general in countries all over the world.

In the following section I will try to identify certain advantages and limitations of this method and how, despite certain limitations, this method has best served my research objectives.

## ORAL HISTORY NARRATIVES: QUALITATIVE ADVANTAGE:

As a general practice the oral history interview is a process initiated by the interviewer or researcher with the objective of making sense of a certain social phenomena which cannot be arrived at by relying on archival information. Due to this general objective the researcher visualises a broad area of discussion but with the intention of tapping a certain aspect of the interviewee's memory. Hence, she resorts to framing some general questions that she intends to find answers to. However, generally speaking, information obtained as a response to already prepared questions could sound like a doctored drawing out of information restricting the scope of what the narrator and interviewee would have done differently. In this way, at the outset it, it would look like manufacturing evidence. By its very nature, however, "the recorded in-depth interview is a research method that is based on direct intervention by the observer and on the evocation of evidence" in the context of the interview (Yow 1994: 4). This is not something unique to oral history interviews. The method was in vogue since the time of the ancient Greeks. As the interview takes place in a particular social context in which both the seeker and the narrator live the process of interaction between them allows for a certain amount of human element such as empathy or shared historical memory to affect the process. In the process of obtaining qualitative data this is inevitable as the narrator requires someone else who inspires and prods her memory to surface and then record and present the narrative. However, much depends upon how the questions are formulated. In my own experience, though I had designed questions as a preparatory tool, I have left them sufficiently open around broad themes that related to the scope of my research. My experience shows that while overly controlled interviews may restrict spontaneity, questions based on broad themes can elicit valuable information. In addition to all the above, my own location within the South Asian community was certainly helpful in approaching people of various religious and national backgrounds, not to mention the ease of understanding the cultural codes and shared, collective memory.



## QUALITATIVE DATA WITHOUT A HYPOTHESIS

The recorded in-depth interview is a specific data collection method under qualitative research. Though there is discussion about whether the questions should be structured and pre-planned, the general caution from researchers is to approach the research without preconceptions. In any case, one cannot be rigid with this approach as a certain amount of preparation is desired, though the researcher would have to constantly improvise the questions depending on the situation and the kind of narrator one deals with. Hence, while self-reflexivity is a key strength in a researcher, it also enables one to intervene sensibly in the process resulting in valuable information. Such information offers the possibilities to construct new hypotheses as Yow argues: “[T]he in-depth interview enables the researcher to give the subject leeway to answer as he or she chooses, to attribute meanings to experiences under discussion, and to interject topics. In this way new hypotheses may be generated” (Yow 1994: 5-6). Such a grasp of nuanced information is possible only because the interviewer is present and is in direct interaction with the narrator. The importance of the narrator’s role is well noted by Portelli who argues that “[O]ral testimony is only a potential resource until the researcher calls it into existence. The condition for the existence of the written source is its emission; for oral sources it is their transmission (Portelli 1991: 103).

Hence, qualitative data, as a potential source as well as a non-rigid and changeable instrument of obtaining information, allows the researcher freedom to develop interactional questions and interventions, as she can watch the behaviour of the informant and respond accordingly. In this way one can learn new things and come across unforeseen information depending on the kind of experiences an informant is enabled to narrate. As Yow observes, “[T]his possibility of discovering something not even thought of before is an advantage of the method” (Yow 1994: 7). Such diversity and breadth of information is well evident in the interviews I have recorded.

Under the broad research objective, I have allowed the narrators to come up spontaneously to speak about their memories around the general topic. However,

despite the advantages of obtaining broad-based information, for the very reason that it is a time-consuming enterprise, there are limitations with regard to the number of narrators one can interview for a particular project, a fact noted by Yow where she acknowledges: “[.....], in-depth interviews are time-consuming, and so the qualitative researcher cannot examine the number of cases that the quantitative researcher can. Generalizations about a wider population have to be even more tentatively held” (Yow 1994: 7). The tentative nature of generalisations do appear to be a weakness of oral history interview data, though given the social frameworks of memory, one can reasonably assume that the major themes cropping up from a sizeable number of interviews do offer reasonable certainty to the conclusions drawn.

#### THE RESEARCHER, THE QUESTIONS, AND THE BIAS

As discussed earlier, the criticisms about memory as a source for historical knowledge apply equally to oral history narratives as they stem from the memory of individuals. However, the credibility of oral sources is a different kind of credibility. As Portelli observes:

[T]he importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in. Therefore there are no 'false' oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of historical philological criticism that apply to every document, the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that 'untrue' statements are still psychologically 'true', and that these previous 'errors' sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts (Portelli 1981: 100).

No method is totally free from bias as it deals with human beings whose interpretation of events is contingent upon multiple factors that affect them. The researcher has to contend with her own social context and ideological affiliations and the reasons that drove her into the process of research. Despite all these hurdles, interviews in oral

history and the researcher's role are very important. It is because "[T]he content of the oral source depends largely on what the interviewer puts into it in terms of questions, stimuli, dialogue, personal relationship of mutual trust or detachment. Generally the researcher decides if there will be an interview" (Portelli 1981: 103). However, there is strong possibility that the interviewer can end up introducing elements of distortion in the process of the interview by overtly imposing one's research objectives or one's own ideological frame. On the other hand, overly structured interview can fail to produce elements of information previously unknown to the researcher. Hence, the researcher must "accept the informant and give priority to what she wishes to tell rather than what the researcher wishes to hear" (Portelli 1981: 103). In this process the interviewer actively intervenes with questions that crop up spontaneously to judiciously supplement more information. Hence, qualitative data obtained through oral history interviews becomes a collaborative product between the interviewer and the narrator.

The questionnaire by its very nature of having been designed generally around a topic under consideration limits the scope of what one can and cannot narrate. This problem is exacerbated by the available time to conduct the interview. Moreover, one needs to take into consideration the identity perceptions of the interviewer and the narrator, about themselves and about each other. Given the kind of historically loaded identity perceptions among the South Asians, one cannot ignore this issue as it can impact on what one is prepared to speak, to whom and how. Being someone who neither belongs to the religious identities of Hindu or Muslim communities, I had the privilege of being accepted as a rather unbiased, benevolent interviewer. Besides the above, one should also know that the data in itself is sterile until someone uses it in a productive way through interpretation. At this stage of intervention the data acquires a point of view unique to every researcher's larger objective. Hence, as for the qualitative researcher, rather than worrying about the subjective aspect within the data, she should use it productively. Here the process of interaction between the researcher and the narrator will be richer if one can harness the element of affect that one observes in the process of interviewing which can contribute towards certain valuable

conclusions. Hence, this process of learning “a way of life by studying the people who live it and asking them how they think about their experiences” (Yow 1994:7) and a close examination of their narratives provides important themes that will help the researcher arrive at certain conclusions that are unique to the data. All the same, the qualitative researcher “must be conscious of assumptions and interests that inform the work and be aware how and why these change during the research process” (Yow 1994: 9).

I faced this dilemma in the process of my research. When I started my research my focus was on those South Asian immigrants who were directly affected by the events of the Indian Partition of 1947 or the subsequent generations of those who were directly affected by it. As a result, I got myself associated with an impact research project that was already in progress. The interviews conducted by me and others who were involved in the project had their major focus in recording the memories of Partition of British India among South Asian immigrants to South Wales. However, after conducting the impact assessment of this project and gathering feedback from the South Asian Community in South Wales, who needed the project to focus more on the stories of their migration and the issues that they faced in the process of their settlement over the years, I had to modify the focus of the remaining interviews that I conducted subsequently. Hence, my own proposed research focus shifted to cover these issues as well as to include later migrations from East Africa and other parts of the world. However, South Asian migration cannot be understood without considering the overarching effects of colonialism and the Partition of British India. The impact of how the imperial government treated various communities during their colonial rule, how the violence of Partition affected various communities differently and how the relationship between these partitioned nations affects them when their citizens meet one another as migrants living in different countries has special bearing on their memories and their narratives. For this reason I have employed both sets of interviews together which form a robust set of data that has emerged from the collective memory of South Asians in South Wales.

## THE NARRATORS AND THE DATA

The nature of narrators, their past history and their present context of life and political affiliations, and even their economic situation, affects the way they recall their memories today-an issue argued well by Portelli. He says that “the fact remains, however, that today's narrator is not the same person as took part in the distant events which he or she is now relating. Nor is age the only difference. There may have been changes in personal subjective consciousness as well as in social standing and economic conditions, which may induce modifications, affecting at least the judgement of events and the colouring of the story” (Portelli 1981: 102).

As mentioned above, the South Asians in the UK belonged to the British colonies where at different times of their rule the British dealt differently with Indians. Especially towards the end of their rule in India, when the independence movement was gaining ground and the Congress Party was in the ascendancy, the British made use of Muslim anxiety of a probable majoritarian Hindu rule by propping up Jinnah and the Muslim League, resulting in their demand for Partition (Hasan 2001). This divide and rule policy along with special treatment of Muslim interests by the British had played into the hands of the Hindu fundamentalists which eventually morphed into Hindutva of today. Basing on the principle of two-nation theory, today they have set upon establishing India as a Hindu nation, which means Hindu majoritarian rule with exclusionary politics and practices that try to isolate minorities. These discourses in India, the anti-India discourses in Pakistan and Bangladesh and the history of wars between all these countries, once united under British colonial rule, continually affect how various South Asian communities remember, perceive, and interpret their past today. My interviews amply illustrate this subjective consciousness of the narrators against a unique historical past, though one could discern a sad feeling of loss of a once glorious, and united homeland. With my own experience of living in India for the last few decades and living and interacting with the South Asians as a community in South Wales for over a decade, I could not but notice this feeling of unjust division of India among various generations of migrants. The interviews illustrate this fact time and again.

Due to the nature of the communities that are part of what we have come to accept as South Asian for the purpose of this research I had to choose as representative narrators as possible. Hence among the 23 narrators 4 belonged to the Sikh community, 11 belonged to the Hindu community and 8 belonged to the Muslim community. As to where they came from: 15 from India (but many came via Africa), 6 from Pakistan (though some of them or their parents had migrated to Pakistan from India during Partition) and 2 from Bangladesh. From the perspective of gender 14 were male and 9 were female. Among the narrators almost all are first generation immigrants except for two of second generation and one of third generation.

Given the nature of the group of narrators, they do represent the South Asian community according to their national and religious identity. However, my data will not reflect the views of the second and third generation South Asians to the extent I would have liked to, though what these two second generation and one third generation immigrants narrate is unique and valuable and indicative of the rich research data that can be of immense value for similar future research. Hence, with the diversity of narrators that I have interviewed I do feel that they represent the South Asian community in South Wales rather well. As already mentioned, the interviews were conducted personally by me as well as through the help of others. The number of interviews is small, but large enough for the purpose of this research. They were chosen from among the available people with experience of the partition of 1947 (directly or through family experiences of the event), migration (from various parts of the world) and settling in the UK. Very often new narrators are found through a snowball method of having been introduced by one another. In obtaining the requisite data I have fully complied with the University prescribed ethical guidelines and obtained approval from the ethics committee for the questionnaire used to obtain information. Consent was obtained from all the participants by way of their reading and signing the consent form. None of the participants had any objection to use their names and identities in how and where their information is employed. However, to

safeguard participants' privacy I have sufficiently anonymised their names in my research.

## DISCUSSIONS OR QUESTIONS AT INTERVIEWS

Having determined the method of gathering data and identified the narrators who could participate and provide useful information, I intended to design the interview questions on the following broad categories:

1. Memories: What was their experience of Partition? The factors that led to their decision to leave the country of their birth, or their earlier settlement.
2. Narratives of Migration: Who came here? Why did they come? How did they come?
3. Narratives of Settlement: How did they cope with the new country upon their arrival?
4. Narratives of Identity: How did they see themselves in their new country on arrival?
5. Colonial Constructions: How did their past history and experience of partition affect their living, interaction and integration into British society?
6. Postcolonial Experiences: How did they deal with each other? i. e. How did Indians and Pakistanis (and, later, Bangladeshis) who arrived here after the partition interact with each other?

During the interviews I had taken care to identify if the narrator was an immigrant of the first or second generation. Accordingly questions, specifically tailored to gather nuanced information specific to different generations, national origins and cultural belonging, were asked relating to their identity perceptions, their belonging to their cultural community and how they view their belonging to the national British community. This special and nuanced interviewing has produced rather valuable information which I have used in my discussion about migrant belonging and identity.

## MAKING SENSE OF THE NARRATIVES: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Oral sources have their peculiar characteristics which make them valuable sources but because of their typical nature they also act as complementary sources towards understanding the past or present. Given its oral nature the data from an oral history interview will not be the same twice. Moreover, oral history data, because no interview can exhaust narrativising of the entire memory, will always be inherently incomplete: “Oral historical research therefore always has the unfinished nature of a work in progress” (Portelli 1981: 104). This unfinished nature of oral history also leaves all research an unfinished project though no historical research can be robust without integrating oral sources. However, one should keep in mind that “there is never absolute certainty about any event, about any fact, no matter what sources are used. No single source or combination of them can ever give a picture of the total complexity of the reality. We cannot reconstruct a past or present event in its entirety because the evidence is always fragmentary” (Yow 1994: 20). All we can do is take what is presented to us through written and oral sources and interpret the event to the best of our professional ability, always being aware of the limitations of the generalisations that we come to make. In order to come to certain generalisations from the oral narratives one can utilise certain methods of analysis which can yield more accurate interpretations. In my research I have adopted some tools which are called ‘thematic analysis’ as provided by Boyatzis (1998).

For Boyatzis thematic analysis is a unique way of seeing; meaning, what one sees in a narrative, may not be perceived by another in the same manner. However, if they can share or agree with the same insight, the “insight appears almost magical. If they are empowered by the insight, it appears visionary” (Boyatzis 1998: 1). In order to universalise what one sees in a narrative, certain robust techniques are required which, if employed by others, they could also see similar themes. The thematic analysis technique proposed by Boyatzis entails three stages in the enquiry: recognizing an important aspect, encoding it and then interpreting it (Boyatzis 1998: 1).



Oral history interviews are generally recorded on an audio or video device. As oral information preserved in aural format it contains certain peculiarities and richness that cannot be rendered in transcription, though transcription is a normal manner of dealing with such data. Portelli (1981) refers to intonations, pauses, velocity of speech etc. which cannot be rendered into writing. Moreover, the very use of a particular language (style) bears certain meaning. Complexity of rendering the oral data into written format entails certain difficulties as noted by Portelli, who argues,

For instance, it has been shown that the tonal range, volume range, and rhythm of popular speech carry many class connotations which are not reproducible in writing (unless it be, inadequately and partially, in the form of musical notation). The same statement may have quite contradictory meanings, according to the speaker's intonation, which cannot be detected in the transcript but can only be described, approximately (Portelli 1981: 98).

Given the subtleties involved in memory narratives, I have tried to use a mixed approach of using recorded interviews directly to transcribe the themes arising out of the interviews, and in some cases I have transcribed the entire interviews personally and used those that have been already transcribed by others for the Research Impact Project in which I participated. Due to my personal and direct involvement in the process of interviewing in many cases, listening to the audio interviews and recording the themes and quotes from the narrators, I was able to get as authentic a sense of the narrators' intended meaning as possible.

#### LIMITATIONS: GENDER, CLASS, CASTE, AGE, IDEOLOGIES

In this research I have paid attention to how various communities are represented based on their national and religious backgrounds. There was some deficiency in the representation of interviewees based on their gender, class, caste and age (Woodward 2004). Cultural values and political ideologies influence the way we order and

prioritise events, not least the way we understand and treat concepts such as myth, history, fact or fiction. Of all these, gender roles and power dynamics between genders affect significantly the way events are experienced and narrated (Sangster 1994). In the context of migration it is essential to consider issues pertaining to gender and class because of the implications they have on power relations among those who migrate because migration is not experienced in the same way by women and by men as the interview data amply demonstrates. Most of those who migrated as labourers in the early years after the Partition were men. In most cases, women followed eventually as dependents. However, migration research in most cases treats women as un-gendered (Woodward 2004). In most communities of South Asian background women, having a subordinate position, were absent from discourse surrounding labour migrations. But their unique position and role within the economy of migration would certainly make them see things differently. It applies not only to the stories of their migration but also the way they interpret events based on the interactions between individuals and communities. The difference is well accounted for in the interviews.

However, with regard to class and caste, I feel that most of the narrators belonged predominantly to middle or working class backgrounds, in the British sense, though these categories are fluid and unclear in the case of immigrants who may have considered themselves as middle class in India or Pakistan but had to take up working class jobs and live in working class areas. I believe that this situation may not have much effect on the data that I intended to obtain though one can find this slide in social position among most migrants.

Narratives from second and third generations of South Asians would have made my research much more nuanced, a lack I would like to acknowledge, but because it was beyond the scope of my research question, though I think that it would be a future research avenue.

With regard to the ethical concerns about my own research interest in the topic, my own inner resentment against the fundamentalist religious ideologies that caused the

division of the nation (India) and the continued grip of the same ideologies over people of South Asia and South Asian immigrants to the UK and my strong desire to contribute towards a sensible discourse about immigration, I had to constantly keep in mind the following caution from Sangster (1994: 10-11): "It is important to acknowledge how our own culture, class position and political worldview shapes the oral histories we collect, for the interview is a historical document created by the agency of both the interviewer and the interviewee". To a large extent my interview data may have the limitations of not only my unconscious desires and interests, but also of those others who were a part of this process. That there are here interviews conducted by four of us, who were involved in various capacities with the project, also influences this problem.

## CONCLUSION

Under the broader objective of intervening in the muddled discourses of immigration in Europe, with special reference to the UK, I had argued that the British national discourse should be supplemented with the narratives from minority communities. In order to do so reliance on written or archival sources is inadequate, as it is specious when it comes to immigrant issues and, hence, it is imperative to rely on memory narratives. Oral history interviews, as I have discussed here, are found to be a most suitable research tool. However, oral sources, being unique in their nature, also have their own unique strengths and weaknesses. Keeping this in mind, I had conducted the interviews personally and with the help of others. While I consider them useful for my research, I do acknowledge their limitations as discussed above. However, they sufficiently reflect certain themes that I would like to analyse in this research work where I intend to deal with the issues surrounding migration and the identities the immigrants construct for themselves in the process of negotiating their shared belonging to the country of their migration.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MIGRATION, DREAMS AND MEMORIES

*“Each individual exodus is a triumph of the human spirit, courage and ingenuity overcoming the bureaucratic barriers imposed by the fearful rich” -P. Collier <sup>17</sup>*

#### INTRODUCTION

In the preceding two chapters I have tried to argue how, for people or communities that lack archival privilege and are consigned to silence in national historical narratives, their collective memory is a great source for discursive intervention as well as for community formation. It is because individuals, despite their memory being personal, participate in the social frames of memory archive(s) and the manner of their recollection (Halbwachs 1992). With the help of this theoretical background, in this chapter, I will be analysing the interview data that I have gathered for the purpose of this research project from immigrants of South Asian origin currently living in South Wales.

The key objective of this narrative analysis about the South Asian presence in Britain is to question the received ideas of Britishness (and Welshness) and belonging, as well as to rearticulate the more complex nature of South Asian identity, their unique relationship with Britain and the manner of their belonging in the UK. In some ways, it is an effort to enrich the narratives of being British by unravelling diverse histories of those who migrated to these Islands due to complex circumstances and enhance the scholarship that has started focussing on the rich sources of Britain's long multicultural past (Boehmer and Nasta 2013). My research tries to focus on their migrant reality further and recognises the lack of space for their history of colonial participation in British history. It also examines the story of their settlement, along with the continued opportunities and disadvantages they suffer due to their being immigrants despite their immense contributions to British life.

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<sup>17</sup> Quote from Collier, P. 2014. *Exodus : how migration is changing our world*. New York : Oxford University Press. 11p.

Being part of the South Asian immigrant community I treat this as an ethical imperative to add a voice to this missing or neglected page in British national discourse that relegates “India’s long history in Britain and British Asians firmly outside the nation’s frame” (Boehmer and Nasta 2013: xvi). If Britain is what it is today, it owes a lot of it to its “crown jewel”, India, its colonial exploit for over four hundred years (Dirks 2006). If there are large number of South Asian migrants in the UK today, it is due to their colonial relationship with Britain and due to Britain’s acts of colonial expansion to other continents, such as Africa, that necessitated indentured labour from India (Harzig and Hoerder 2013). Of all the causes, the Partition of the country in 1947, which caused large scale displacement of populations and perpetuated communal conflicts in the region, not to mention the continued enmity and wars between India and Pakistan, was the most serious blunder by the British that has forced more and more people to migrate (Visram 2002). This remains the pivotal event that overshadows South Asian migration and identity wherever they go, especially the fraught relationship between people of the various portioned entities. Moreover, if South Asians and people from other impoverished countries still migrate to the UK, it is because Britain’s imperial legacy all over the world has produced a predatory and market fundamentalist economic order, along with its close alliance with the US’ “War on Terror”, rendering the world further destabilised and extremely unequal and unethical (Robins 2011). Britain’s recent bombing campaigns in Libya, its role in Iraq Wars, its support for certain factions in Syrian civil War and its role in multilateral international institutions such as IMF, World Bank, UN Security Council has helped in engendering a world order which has been consistently creating failed states and cultural fundamentalisms. This is a reality that we witness today in the form of refugees and migrants trying to reach Europe in unprecedented numbers, against all odds, keeping the immigration discourses’ pot continually boiling.

Hence, given its role in history and in the present world order, in my view, Britain, and the West in general, has an ethical responsibility to acknowledge their role in the

displacement of large numbers of people from all over the world<sup>18</sup>, and, therefore, accommodate and integrate in its history and national self-definition those that have become part of Britain. This should be done through a mature approach to immigration that neither treats it as a burden of historic guilt, nor on the basis of mere economic calculations though such moral and economic concerns are affecting the current political debates (Collier 2014). Hence, in this chapter, my objective, in a small way, is to present a discourse from the perspective of South Asian immigrants and how their long presence and contributions have been instrumental in the evolution of the British national identity.

As a methodological approach for this chapter, I will thematically analyse the narratives of South Asians living in South Wales from the perspectives of their decisions to migrate, caused by factors arising from the socio-political and economic imperatives encountered in the places of their origin which act as push factors, and those socio-political and economic opportunities available to them that attract them to Britain acting as pull factors (Harzig and Hoerder 2013). Besides the above, I will also pay attention to the individual factors such as their dreams of adventure and hopes of a better life, and their circuitous journeys and the realities of life as immigrants in the UK. As already discussed in the introductory chapter, this objective is pursued within the context of the prevalent stereotypical, exclusionary and racist political and media discourses about immigrants in the West in general and with special reference to Britain. The objective is, also, to record the positive and negative experiences of South Asians in the UK in the process of their efforts to negotiate their belonging to the country and the implications of this process upon their self-understanding (identity) as well as their relationship with the communities where they have come to settle. (The last issue about how South Asian Immigrants to Britain see themselves is discussed in

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<sup>18</sup> In the face of unprecedented rise in migrants' crossing over from Libya to Italy, some right-leaning politicians in the UK described these migrants as criminal, scum etc. Against such discourses and the general attitude of the British establishment, David Walker, bishop of Manchester, decries such language as unworthy and calls for the country to take responsibility for its actions in Libya and take in fair share of migrants. As reported by Mark Townsend, Saturday 25 April 2015, Bishop says Britain has a moral duty to accept refugees from its wars. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/25/uk-moral-duty-accept-refugees-from-wars-david-walker-bishop-manchester>.

the next chapter that deals with issues of Identity and Belonging). The analysis is categorised under the following themes as obtained through the process of thematic analysis conducted according to the method theorised by Boyatzis (Boyatzis 1998): South Asians: a diasporic and a transnational community; a community with a multiculturalist legacy vitiated by Partition; a community moving beyond diasporic identities, a community defying stereotypes. In the analysis and presentation I have taken care to anonymise the names so that the privacy of the participants is protected.

However, before I set upon presenting and analysing the narrative information to situate South Asians' specific immigration to Britain, I would like to place migration in the larger context of a human phenomenon and hence, make sure that it is not perceived as something specific or extraordinary in today's context alone. Secondly, I would like to argue that migration affects not merely the receiving countries as the discourses predominantly make it to appear, but it equally affects families, communities and countries from where people migrate. Placing migration and its effects in such a broader perspective is important to relativise its current privileging as a frenzied discourse with fear mongering and racist connotations. Moreover, I would also like to make it a point that emergence of communities with transnational networks is also a natural phenomenon in a globalised and networked world, a fact every nation state need to consider when formulating integration policies. The following two sections will deal with these two issues before I proceed to discuss the very character of South Asian migration, the nature of South Asian communities abroad and how they view their own experience of migration and negotiating their manner of belonging to societies where they have migrated to. Hence, I begin with the question: Is human migration something new today or did it exist always as a human phenomenon?

## MIGRATION: A HUMAN PHENOMENON

Spencer Wells' *Genographic Project*<sup>19</sup> (see National Geographic Project) confirms the commonly held scientific theory that the evolution and history of human species is one of global migration. This observation is supported by his laboratory tests on the 'Y' chromosome of the male DNA samples randomly collected from all over the globe or sent by people desiring to know their origin. The BBC series by Alice Roberts, *The Incredible Human Journey*<sup>20</sup>, goes to show the globalising journeys of one species, *Homo sapiens*, by concentrating on 'stones, bones and genes.' Describing the phenomenon, Harzig & Hoerder (2009) say: "[T]he history of humanity is a history of migration" (p 8). The evolution of modern man in East Africa led to many migrations across the globe, made humankind highly mobile and migrant over all the continents of the earth. Their bipedal capacity to use language, tools and community sociation eventually developed technical skills, which helped them accumulate knowledge in the form of technology (memory preserved in artefacts) and equipped them to deal with and harness nature for their living and survival even in inhospitable conditions of extreme cold, heat and the wild (Stiegler 1998). Viewed from an evolutionary perspective, the underlying reasons for human migration, namely, sustenance and security remain predominantly similar even in today's postmodern migrations. However, since the last two centuries, the issue has acquired political importance by the historical emergence of nation-states that define themselves as ethnic and

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<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in the National Geographic website the Genographic Project "is a multiyear research initiative led by National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Dr Spencer Wells. Dr Wells and a team of renowned international scientists are using cutting-edge genetic and computational technologies to analyse historical patterns in DNA from participants around the world to better understand our human genetic roots." A detailed explanation about this project see: *The Genographic Project*, <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com>

<sup>20</sup> "The Incredible Human Journey is a five-episode science documentary and accompanying book, written and presented by Alice Roberts. It was first broadcast on BBC television in May and June 2009 in the UK. It explains the evidence for the theory of early human migrations out of Africa and subsequently around the world, supporting the Out of Africa Theory. This theory claims that all modern humans are descended from anatomically modern African *Homo sapiens* rather than from the more archaic European and Middle Eastern *Homo neanderthalensis* or the indigenous Chinese *Homo pekinensis*, and that the modern African *Homo sapiens* did not interbreed with the other species of genus *Homo*. Each episode concerns a different continent, and the series features scenes filmed on location in each of the continents featured." *The Incredible Human Journey*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Incredible\\_Human\\_Journey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Incredible_Human_Journey), downloaded on 17/08/2015



territorial entities offering collective identity to people whom they claim to represent. As ethnic nations they represent the collective identity of dominant or majority groups while treating other ethnicities as minorities who are often forced to subsume their interests and identities within the dominant ethnicity's identity as assumed by the nation-state (Smith 2004). Nation states' ethnic character is further legitimised by their exclusive power over a definite geographical territory rendering them susceptible to racist and exclusionary discourses where some among the population are categorised as foreigners, immigrants and minorities (Lahav and Messina 2006). This makes immigration discourse, predominantly a post-national phenomenon where the hegemonic group as national majority deploys its power and influence, to set standards for minorities to conform to on what it defines as national culture and identity ((Hesse and Sayyid 2006). These standards are continually reproduced in national discourses and practices, and function as national ideologies. The policies formulated on the basis of these ideologies define who belongs and who does not, and in what manner. However, as time has proved, such an organisation of the people with multiple territorial, cultural and ethnic identities, forced to live under the cultural and territorial umbrella of the dominant ethno-cultural identity groups, is bound to produce disaffection and discontent among other identity communities. As a result, most nation-states, from time to time, are confronted with multiple demands from multiple identity groups, (linguistic, religious, territorial, ethnic etc.) to redefine itself vis-à-vis these communities.

Such territorially organised, multi-ethnic entities called nation-states have seen the inflow of more people from other similar entities into their national-territorial space crossing over for various reasons. They are called immigrants. This identification of people crossing borders as immigrants assumes the fact that they originally decided to move away from a similar, territorially circumscribed nation, which is their homeland. Viewed from this angle, international migration as defined by Lahav & Messina is a "movement of persons that is non-nationals or foreigners across national borders for purposes of travel or short-term residence" (Lahav & Messina 2006: 1). As the history of migration of people has shown, in many cases those that arrived as

travellers and especially, those seeking economic opportunities, despite their original intentions to return to their homelands, ended up staying and making the countries of their arrival their new homelands (Harzig and Hoerder 2013). This, however, did not restrict them from having links with their homelands, nor among their family and country-folks living in other countries, rendering them into communities sharing a Diaspora consciousness and Diaspora or transnational social organisation. Gradually, in the countries they began to live in they laid claims to various kinds of citizenship rights basing their arguments upon universal human rights and personhood as offered by international bodies such as UNO, UNESCO, International Human Rights Treaties etc. (Soysal 1996). Many nation states, on their part, found the scale of international migration overwhelming and due to their inability to construct a stable, pluralist social order several of them “turned away from the idea of assimilating or integrating their ethnic minorities”<sup>2</sup> - an assumption they had entertained all along. Instead, many of them adopted a contested approach named *multiculturalism* which makes it possible for “minorities no longer desire to abandon their pasts” but set up communities with links to their people everywhere else. The process of globalization has further strengthened those immigrant groups that wish to maintain thick borders around their past identities while living in another country and has even offered ways and means to reinvent their ties with the homeland (Cohen 1996: 507).

Retention of Diaspora identities by immigrants and their emerging social, cultural and political presence has affected communities in the host countries in multiple ways. Due to fears of ideologically entrenched racist attitudes, fear of competition for jobs and living space, and especially the fear of being swamped by other cultures, resistance to immigration has become a crucial issue in many countries, often taking centre-stage in national and international (European Union) politics.

On the other hand, the overt and covert exclusionary policies practised by the state institutions against immigrants, which are appropriated by racist groups who deploy their hatred and violence against minorities, has created alienation and disaffection among some, especially, among the second and third generation immigrant youth. As

extreme reaction, some Muslim youngsters have been joining extremist groups that espouse violence such as Al Qaeda, Islamic State (ISIS), Al Shabab etc. feeding into the racist ideologies of the Far Right and White Supremacist groups (Kundnani 2012). These developments keep the issue of immigration and migrant belonging constantly simmering in national discourses. However, migration is a complex phenomenon affecting multiple communities and nations, and migrants exhibiting multiple belongings, is a natural phenomenon in a globalised and networked world, an argument that I propose below. Hence, discourses on immigration are an ongoing process in the media and politics in most host countries. The issue and the manner in which this discourse manifested in British politics and media in 2005 became the motivating factor for this research.

### MIGRATION: MULTIPLE BELONGINGS

Migration as a phenomenon has multiple causes and effects, multiple advantages and disadvantages in multiple geographic and social spheres and not just in migrant receiving countries. Historically, all immigration is seen to impact communities of their origin as departing people take with them their knowledge and skills and their emotions and spirit. But, in recent years, the loss is viewed as being balanced by the economic benefits enjoyed by migrants and their families back home. Their remittances are a highly valued commodity by nation-states that are starved of foreign exchange. For such economic reasons their emigrant citizens have been offered special status by the migrant sending countries. In the destination countries, while there are gains in skills, knowledge, investments and spirit, which they fuse into innovative and productive ways of living, immigrants were (and are) also feared and hated because of the possibilities that they could bring diseases and destroy existing culture and belief systems (Harzig and Hoerder 2013).

Both the migrant sending and receiving countries have their stakes in influencing migrants' manner of belonging which depends upon how their contribution is valued. Sending countries count on the remittances that are crucial for their international trade. Hence, they take special interest in preserving the loyalty of their overseas

citizens. Countries like India, Philippines or China have had policies that treat their overseas citizens in favourable terms. Worldwide remittances from migrants to their countries of origin in 2013 were \$404 billion of which India received \$70 billion. This sum was more than the \$65 billion earned by its flagship software industry.<sup>21</sup>

Ratna H, one of the interviewees, illustrates how villages in Kutch in Gujarat in India have benefitted from Gujarati migrants to the UK. As already mentioned many of them own houses and properties in their home-villages. Besides constructing houses, their contribution comes in many other forms. I quote:

Because those who are here and they have money that they spend when they go there, the villages have also improved. Because.... They earn money here and put the money there. Because when they go back they contribute to the building of community centres there, temples over there, or all the different hospitals; so everything now there is much more developed.

Even the whole of Gujarat has benefitted. That's why it is a more developed state in India..... India has benefitted from Indians who have migrated.

I personally have witnessed such economic changes in migrant sending countries due to the remittances from emigrants in the coastal areas of India where I lived before. People who migrated to the Middle East since the oil boom of 1970s and then others who migrated to Europe and North America have transformed the areas economically and educationally. This brings me to enquire into the nature of South Asians' diasporic character and any unique features it has, which I try to do through the use of interview data.

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<sup>21</sup> This figure is based on the World Bank press release of April 11, 2014: Remittances to developing countries to stay robust this year, despite increased deportations of migrant workers. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/04/11/remittances-developing-countries-deportations-migrant-workers-wb>. Downloaded on 09.12.2014. According to World Bank's revised estimate remittances from international migrants to developed nations will be \$436 billion in 2014 rising to \$516 billion in 2016.

## DIASPORA AND TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY

As already discussed in the introductory chapter, South Asia refers to countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar (Burma),<sup>22</sup> Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka. In order to make my field of study manageable and present Partition as a major cause of migration, I have interviewed people belonging only to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh-the region British subjected to Partition in 1947. Moreover, of the 20 million migrants currently estimated to be from South Asia the bulk comes from these three nation-states. In their long history of dispersion they have migrated to Europe, Africa, East Asia, Middle East, North America and other parts of the world. There is evidence for South Asian migration to distant lands as Gypsies, traders, missionaries and conquerors in earlier history, but larger numbers migrated to various parts of the world because of British Empire's policy of indentured labour to other British colonies to work in plantations and other various projects. Vijay Mishra (2007: 2) has categorised this phase of migration as *old archive*, by which he means "early modern, classic capitalist... nineteenth-century indenture". However, larger and more notable migrations happened as a result of World War II and the collapse of the British Empire resulting in Indian Partition. This coincided with demand for professional and factory labour in post-World War II Britain, the USA and other parts of the world. Mishra (2007:3) categorises this dispersion as *new archive*, by which he means "the late modern or late capitalist" taking place in the context of a world "fully constituted and organised" as transnational and highly networked. These two groups of migrants share two different topographies. If the old migrants shared a world of complex relationships, power and privileges with other colonised peoples, the new ones had moved to metropolitan centres of the Empire and other developed countries, forming part of the global migration of current discourse on globalisation and immigration. It should be noted that the South Asian migrants of the new archive contain also those who migrated from the old archive, especially the descendants of the indentured labourers, artisans, professionals and traders. The latter can be treated as twice

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<sup>22</sup> Myanmar (Burma) can be considered part of either South Asia or South East Asia though it had close links with other South Asian countries by being a British colony and by its links with other South Asian countries.

displaced: First, migrants to other parts of the British Empire and, then, to metropolitan centre of the Empire.

My interviewees represent both categories as depicted by Mishra. This will be clear in the course of the discussion. Can they all be considered part of the South Asian diaspora or should they be treated as transnational migrants? Do they all belong or share the same Diaspora identity equally? I will try to discuss here these issues by referring to interviews of South Asians living in South Wales and who think of themselves as a Diaspora or a transnational community. On their own, though, they do not use these terms, not even as response in the interviews. In order to clarify these terms I need to link them to discussions about understanding South Asians as one group. With the help of arguments from Brubaker and Cooper (2000) I have tried to explain how, in this research, identity as a term can be applied to people of South Asian origin despite the complexity of reality that it identifies. With such complexity can South Asians living in Britain be categorised as a Diaspora? Are they also a transnational community? How do these two concepts differ from each other?

## DIASPORA OR TRANSNATIONAL

Vijay Mishra, a prominent theoretician with excellent research on the Indian Diaspora I have referred to earlier, argues that having been facilitated by their imperial citizenship, indentured labour dispersal, effects of globalization and, not the least, by the adventurous streak in their own character, all those who have migrated over the years from the Indian subcontinent are part of the Diaspora community (Mishra 2007). Accordingly, for the South Asians, in the process of their multiple journeys and sojourns, Britain was one of the nodal points of such a network along with other points in Europe, America, the Middle East, Australia and Africa. These multiple journeys and sojourns, with the interaction of the memories of their roots (homelands) and routes (journey-migrations; see Murji 2008) have engendered a unique self-consciousness that has been especially instrumental in shaping their South Asian Diaspora identity (Mishra 2007). However, the term Diaspora needs be understood correctly in order to apply it to as diverse a group as 20 million migrants from South

Asian background with their varying degrees of affinity and divergence of national, cultural, religious, linguistic and regional affinities. Such assumptions of belonging appear more complicated with experiences of persecution and communal violence<sup>23</sup> which are a regular feature of these societies. Hence, one needs to clarify what it means to be a Diaspora and how it applies to South Asians in Britain.

## DIASPORA-A CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS

The term Diaspora in its original sense in Greek means dispersion: dispersion of seed and, in turn, of people who are assumed to share a collective memory in space with three key characteristics as observed by Rogers Brubaker (2005:5-6) who, in turn, builds his argument from the earlier studies on Diaspora done by William Safran (1991), James Clifford (1994) and Robin Cohen (1996): 1. *Dispersion*: Strictly referring to dispersion by force or traumatic experience, but broadly referring to any population that is deterritorialised and dispersed and currently lives in a land other than where it originated, having their social, political and economic networks cross beyond national borders and span over the globe (Vertovec 1997). 2. *Homeland Orientation*: the orientation to a real or imagined homeland as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty. This refers to a definitive space enveloped in the collective memory of the people as identified as the land of ancestors, which is imagined to be an ideal place to which one wishes to eventually return and for whose safety, prosperity and restoration one would work as part of a group. 3. *Boundary Maintenance*: This refers to people's effort to preserve a distinctive identity in contrast and opposition to their host society (Brubaker 2005: 5-6).

Are these three key characteristics verified in South Asians living in South Wales in the UK today? That they share an ethnicity and a collective memory as those belonging to South Asian sub-continent is without doubt. None of the interviewees denies this

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<sup>23</sup> Here, I would like to refer to minorities and persecuted groups from among the South Asian nation-states. Whether any elements of being a Diaspora are felt by such groups towards their homelands is an issue that has the potential to question the assumptions that all South Asian migrants feel themselves part of the Diaspora in the strict sense. This extends to generations of migrants further down the line who have hardly any affinity with the land of their forefathers.

fact, though they identify this space of their collective memory, South Asia, in terms of their individual nationalities which emerged with the exit of the British in 1947. With regard to boundary maintenance, one can notice it as a strong phenomenon among South Asians. It is clear from most interviewees who speak often about community formation with special reference to religious and cultural practices though these boundaries are more fluid among the second and subsequent generations. But the issue of homeland orientation appears to be problematic among South Asian Diaspora. Though there are some who entertain dreams and hopes of returning to homeland of their ancestors, such desire ebbs over the years and they settle permanently and, as James Clifford notes, South Asians are a peculiar diaspora that is “not so much oriented to roots in a specific place and a desire to return”; rather, they try to “recreate a culture in diverse locations” with “decentred, lateral connections” (1994: 305-306). This aspect of the South Asian Diaspora goes beyond the classical application of the term which referred to Jewish, Greek or Armenian people who are dispersed all over the world. This could be illustrated from most cases that I interviewed, I refer to two here: Vikram V and Ratna H.

Visram V., a Hindu by religion, was born in 1953 in Madhavpur village in Kutch district of Gujarat, India, and had migrated to Kenya in 1971. His father and two brothers had already migrated in the 1950s and were working in the construction industry in Kenya. He states that the purpose of his migration to Kenya was to obtain a British passport which he would not have been able to get from India. His ultimate goal was to migrate to the UK and finally did by moving to Britain in 1975. Now his family is spread over many continents and it represents the diaspora and transnational character as discussed by Vertovec (1999). Despite the spread of the family and community network (as some members of the family living in Kutch, Gujarat, others in Africa and his own two children having migrated to Australia where they are citizens), none thinks of returning someday to India. This illustrates what Clifford (1994) identifies as a special characteristic of South Asian Diaspora which defies the typical notion of homeland orientation.



A similar case is with the family of Ratna H. who was born in 1945 in Kutch, Gujarat, but had migrated to Kenya at the age of 11, got his early education in Mombasa and after nine years returned to Mumbai for higher education. However, discontinuing his education there, he left for Britain in 1972 for his higher education. Once in the UK, due to financial constraints, he had to take up a job immediately. He joined British Rail and worked there for the next 32 years, first as a ticket collector, rising eventually to be a train manager. The spread of his family also is an illustration of the Diaspora and transnational character of South Asian migration. While his mother had been in India, his father and brothers had migrated to Kenya where they worked as masons, but he chose to come to the UK and ended up in Cardiff because his cousins were there already. He also narrates the story of Gujarati migrants from the UK having houses in both Britain and Gujarat, India, where they would spend time at different times of the year. This, once again, illustrates the Diaspora character in his community. He says:

Nowadays we have houses (there) which are better than even here. Electricity is there, water supply is there, good roads, transport, even access to a car ... And people have money so.... Life is much easier when you go there. All the people who came here have maintained their links back there. They have all got houses... So when they go back they live in their houses...

These two examples do illustrate South Asians' homeland orientation in some respects but without any intention to give up their citizenship in Britain where they have a sizable community which shares the same identity. This aspect is described by several of my interviewees who speak of their experience of community formation and through these communities try to negotiate their belonging. This process of negotiation as a diaspora community makes them part of a transnational social, economic and cultural network. In this process family networks play an important role.

## FAMILY NETWORK AND COMMUNITY FORMATION

The macro perspectives on migration often speak in terms of processes such as globalisation, colonisation, war or natural disasters. In the case of South Asians, the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation can be considered to be major causes of their migration. Their expulsion from British colonial territories of East Africa turns out to be a key reason for a large number of South Asians migrating to the UK. However, their decisions to migrate to the UK and to particular areas within the UK to settle down are determined by family and community networks. As observed by Stephen Castles (2002) family survival strategies are crucial factors in decisions to migrate and choosing specific locations within countries to migrate.

In the case of most of the interviewees their choice of Wales as a place to migrate was because they had family or community members already living in Cardiff. People chose to come to the UK because they either had a British passport or because they could speak English and not French or German. They chose to live in Cardiff because one of their family, relative or someone from their community, already lived there and could provide support. For example Mohammed R from Bangladesh chose to migrate to the UK and decided to come to Cardiff because he had a cousin already living here:

There was some idea that going to England is good. My cousin was there already since 1956. Our country was poor, no work, nothing. I thought 'if I go there (England) my future will be a little bit better there.

This is also the case with Ratna H who arrived in the UK in 1966 to continue his education. He moved to Cardiff because he "had two cousins; [who] were in Cardiff... [He himself had arrived with] ... Just a little suitcase and £5 in ... pocket. Because that's all what a person was allowed due to foreign exchange restriction in India". The existing family members provided them with food and temporary residence besides helping them find jobs. As their numbers grew they started forming communities of mutual support.

As their numbers grew, South Asians in Cardiff formed community organisations such as *Bangladeshi Welfare Association* in which Rahmat is a member, and *India Cultural Centre* where most of the Gujaratis in Cardiff are associated. Besides such cultural and support organisations they were gradually able to set up their own places of worship as well. Side by side with their interactions with other minorities and the white British people, the South Asians in Britain continued to focus on maintaining their own South Asian identity. It was also prompted by their marginalisation within the broader identity category as Black, which they had embraced for making political claims (Brah 1996). However, they gradually found themselves to be more and more distinct than Blacks, not to mention their own unique cultural background and special colonial status as a middle group between the white British and the Black African (Modood 2005). The key cultural sphere that helped them forge their identities happened through their “commitment to the practice of their religions in Britain’s public sphere by the establishment of mosques, gurdwaras and temples as well as other religious organisations, which they did since the 19th century. Thus they imprinted their cultures on British soil” (Ranasinha 2013: 39). Such religious places were not merely places of worship and community gathering, but eventually were also used as centres of community support and political action against exclusion and racism. It was also the case with some of the business premises owned by them that functioned as social and political organisations (Ranasinha 2013). How the communities and institutions came to be organised is well explained by Ratna H who was one of the early arrivals from among the Gujarati community:

I came in 1966 and there were already 12 or 15 people used to work from my community here. They were all men; there were no women at all because they had come from India... They were Indian citizens, they weren’t educated. But... they either used to work in factories and they used to work shifts and they used to live in one or two houses where they had a room or something. They would cook themselves their meals and....

So at weekends when I had no work I used to go there [where these men lived]..... So at that time the community wasn't there. But gradually, as I said more and more people came with single men, then gradually they were able to bring their families in the early 70s.

The Uganda situation came then..... in early 70s. A lot of Asians came to UK and a lot of them came to Cardiff. So gradually the community members increased..... As I said we had 24 villages (in Gujarat) and they were from one of those villages..... The religion is the same.

So gradually we began to get the community together and organise events by hiring some community hall, Church or something and then began to celebrate Hindu festivals..... And as the numbers increased, basically, we used to have functions every couple of months..... We didn't have a place of our own..... Gradually, we sort of, managed to get a community centre..... People were donating; they would work themselves and improve the place. Then a couple of years later we bought a place of worship .... 1978-79, a temple. Then every week the temple would open and people would go to worship there. So gradually our Gujarati community began to build up...

Besides religion or nation-specific events that were restricted merely to communities based on religion or region in the country of origin, there were events such as the screening of Bollywood movies at weekends that brought together all South Asians irrespective of their internal differences of religion, language or region. These events are fondly remembered and recalled by Ratna and Mohammed respectively:

I remember they used to have Indian cinema at weekends. They used to put up a cinema show. Every Sunday there used to be a cinema. And all the Indians and Pakistanis would see this film..... So the community began to build up and I think the Muslim community was already here before the Indians. And even now.... the Muslim

community is the larger community. But we have a Gujarati community now. My own Kutchi community is about 500-600. But Gujaratis would be about 1000 or so...

Though initially all frequented the cinema halls together to watch Bollywood movies, after the war between India and Pakistan (and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971) communities got divided and started watching them separately exhibiting the distance that was developing among groups as Rahmat recalls:

There was nothing much to do on days off. We went to cinema. Then came the TV. There was Indian cinema in 1965 here. All of us used to watch Indian cinema. But after the War between India and Pakistan, then they watched separately.

The emergence of community organisations and their role in supporting incoming migrants is well illustrated by Vikram V through his own experience of receiving community support:

Most of the people we knew from Gujarat. There are many families from Kutch. So we know each other. Then step by step by weddings, programmes we started to bring new people here.

..... we ..... got support from the family and other support from the community as well. .... At that time people were very helpful. If someone came new they all helped: finance-wise, and also physically. So we have done most of our needs by helping the community.

Community ties were further strengthened through various kinds of help related to immigration by educated members to others. Ratna H illustrates his own case:

In those days I was the one who knew English. So I was called upon to help others when opening bank accounts, immigration processes,

application for passports and that sort of things..... So it was difficult for them, so I did a lot of help..... so people always depended on each other. That's how they basically fitted in. People were friendly. The community always stayed together and helped each other. If someone wanted to buy a house they would lend money so that your mortgage is lower than it would be..... Within families relatives helped...

In this regard Jaswant S's experience is unique because of his long stay in Cardiff and the nature of employment as a social worker. He was Councillor of the Ward, governor of two schools and volunteer at various organisations. In various such capacities he has helped a large number of persons from the South Asian community in their issues of settlement irrespective of their religion, language or areas from where they migrated.

The above aspect of the community formation refers to South Asians' effort at maintaining their identity or boundary in places where they had migrated. This aspect of community formation may also explain why the initial homeland orientation gave way to being part of a transnational network. The following discussion illustrates this movement through the lived experiences of South Asians in Britain.

### RETURN HOME ONE DAY TO A NEW LIFE

Often in migration discourse one would come across arguments that all migrants wanted to leave their place and come to a country like Britain where life was better. It may be the hope and dreams of some and they may find it so. However, for many South Asians, whether they migrated directly from South Asia or from Africa, the move was quite a big compromise in many ways, chiefly due to the loss of family and community support. This reflects Collier's argument that migrants bear enormous costs in their journey due to their decisions to cross over the barriers or the risks involved in circumventing these barriers. In most cases of directly intended action the hope of reaping economic benefits would offset these costs and losses. For a migrant

if the lion's share of a migrant's gain is economic, such gains are largely offset by psychological losses (Collier 2014). This is especially well illustrated in the case of the first generation South Asian immigrants to the UK. Especially for some women it was a very big compromise and a stressful move indeed, because they often accompanied their spouses or family members as dependents. In some cases, their lack of ability to speak English would reduce their ability to find jobs or develop social contacts outside the family. This could explain their desire to return home more acute than that of the male members of the family or community.

Some, like Vimla P, who initially hated being here and wanting to go back eventually, settled down when their lives became more interwoven with the local community and the concerns for earning a living, setting up home and bringing up children took priority. The gradual disappearance of early shocks and anxieties caused by poor knowledge of life here paved the way for a desire to settle down which did happen with better jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and the peace and an orderly life offered by the government in the UK. Mohammad R who arrived in the UK in 1963 from Bangladesh makes such an observation regarding the UK when he says, "I like this country. It is peaceful. I can sleep peacefully. A lot of trouble in Bangladesh, I am peaceful here".

As for others, such as Hari P, for whom his family's migration to Britain was meant to be only for a short period before they returned to India the economic reality did not add up and they decided to stay on permanently. His aspiration was typical of the first generation immigrants in some sense because most of them entertained dreams of returning home one day (Castles 2006). He expresses it this way:

Initially we thought that we would make about £100,000 pounds in a short period of time and we could move away from here and go to India and live there luxuriously. But when that happened a hundred thousand pounds was nothing to live on.

In most cases, as the situation changed and they struck roots with homes and families, the wish to go back gradually started disappearing. This is well expressed by Vimla P who initially entertained dreams of going back to Uganda. She says:

We were still hoping to go back. If Idi Amin changes his mind and calls us back we will be first ones to take a flight to go back.

This intention to go back could have been due to poor social communication which made day to day contact between families spread over the world difficult. The possibility to keep in touch continuously has drastically changed in recent years with the spread of the Internet. The difficulty of being in contact and how it affected her life is described by Vimla in economic terms as follows:

[I] missed the community in Uganda. Communication wasn't good like now. I couldn't make international calls. You have to book the call and wait for the appropriate time..... [It is] expensive, £12 a minute. Only communication method was letters which took a week to ten days.

This was the condition of living in a strange land without family or community which kept her and many others like her desire to return and have the community life that they missed. However, after she had her child her thinking changed. As the community got more organised and the land became more and more familiar the desire to go back gave way to investing all energies in setting up home and working for the future of her children. This was further facilitated by the availability of cheap communication between family members spread all over the world as observed by most researchers (Castells 2011). Such a manner of being in touch was not possible until a few years ago. But with the arrival of Internet communication today one could be in touch with one's family and friends from all over the globe in real time. Though some choose to go back at retirement, even such choices are no more necessary. So having a diaspora community, the eventual disappearance of homeland orientation and forging lateral networking speaks for their transnational character in a multicultural setting. This process of being in the diaspora that forms cultural



communities maintaining their identity, but trying all along to negotiate their belonging, is illustrative of the present day situation of transnational belonging and claims for citizenship without formally foregoing one's cultural identity and belonging, is remarkable (Soysal 2000).

As already discussed, the prevalent understanding of migration, understood as people migrate and settle permanently in the new country by assimilating themselves into the host culture or migrate temporarily for work and return home after a period, fitted well within the logic of nation-states that evolved as ethnic nations. This logic operated on the assumption that immigrants will culturally assimilate themselves and integrate with the dominant national self-understanding. However, under the conditions of globalisation this has changed. The technological facilities available to people who migrate have increased the "temporary, repeated and circulatory migration" resulting in the formation of transnational communities with Diaspora consciousness. Such groups, with their allegiance to multiple nation states has complicated the traditional approach to migrant integration and constantly call into question the logic of ethnic, territorial nation states (Castles 2002:1146). Such multiple belongings are facilitated these days by many countries by offering dual citizenships, a very contentious issue some years ago when nation-states were obsessed with the loyalty of their citizens (Faist 2010). However, today, in a world starved of foreign exchange, countries of migrants' origin offer such facilities to those who emigrate, work or set up businesses abroad, with the prospects of future remittances in view (Collier 2014). Viewing from the point of first generation migrants the concept of Diaspora makes better sense than from the life experiences of second or successive generations. Their own experiences and affiliations may not lend them to be described as Diaspora in the strict sense of the term as they are farther and farther removed from sharing some of the intensive aspects of the collective memory which earlier generations shared. This is what Vikram V sees in his children who are the second generation immigrants:

I think our children don't feel the same about India but when we are still here and they visit India it is fine. But when we are gone they won't. They go, just for holiday. Because there is problem about

language, problem about relatives they might not know because at the time we are here we can introduce..... But when we are gone there is no connection.

If Varsani thinks his children's relationship to India would not be the same as his own and of those who were first generation immigrants, Darshini M, herself being of the second generation among a Gujarati immigrant family, feels that she is more British than Indian. Moreover, having visited India only once in her life (she is over 20 at the time of the interview), she hardly thinks of India. When asked about how she views herself, she has this to say:

(I feel I am) British Indian. I try to maintain my roots because my parents are Indian. Recently become more aware of that side of me, having done this part of the project and having spoken to a lot of Indian people. I try to speak Gujarati as well.

It will help me converse with people in India and my grand-parents want me speak in Gujarati. A lot of my family speak it. Gujarati is not always spoken in the house. English in the house due to parents' work. Even granddad spoke English.

British, because I was born here. Everything I know has to do with Britain. If asked about the history of Britain and India, I know a lot more about British history than Indian history. My first language is English. I feel more British than Indian which is a bit of a shame. I haven't been that much to India either. Gone to India only twice in life: once when I was baby, once when I was 15 for a month. So, not much connection there.

Would like to have both identities equally. I like being British but want to retain my Indian part. But it is difficult when you live here all the time. I can't understand Hindi and so don't watch a lot of Hindi movies either anymore. Feel like I am losing a bit.

Despite her feelings of being somewhat lost, she herself is fully anchored in British life with hardly any interest in issues Indian, Gujarati or South Asian. This situation of the second and the successive generations of South Asian immigrants throws into question the traditional approaches to Diaspora as a concept to analyse immigrant reality today. What causes such reduction in feelings in one's Diaspora identity? Does such movement away from Diaspora identity towards embracing British identity have anything to do with British approach to the migrants? Will such affinity lead to total assimilation into British society? The following section will discuss how nation states deal with issues of migrant integration and if such approaches are successful. Prior to discussing this issue, a brief mention about the limitations of diaspora theory to explain migrant condition in today's context is in place.

According to Brubaker's analysis, in spite of widespread use the term Diaspora, it has been stretched too far to cover a wide range of phenomena. In the bargain it has lost its ability to explain what it claims to do. Besides, Diaspora, if used in its classical sense as dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance, it smacks of essentialism and goes against the efforts of groups to negotiate their belonging in any nation-state as among Islamists. What is left except the mere pursuit of identity politics? This leaves the groups very little chance of achieving their aims unless they are so sizable that they are in a position to influence government formation, which immigrant groups are not. Hence, any conception of politics as an alignment of identity groups is either ineffective or short-lived, especially because of their changing and conflicting interests. As for migrant integration, the longer the essentialist, group boundary maintenance continues, the more difficult will it become for them to participate in mainstream politics. If the term is applied generously to stress hybrid fluidity, syncretism etc. the question of relevance to treat any group as Diaspora arises. Hence, the tension is between boundary maintenance and boundary erosion theorised by Clifford using Gilroy's statement, "changing same, continuous change is something constant" (1994: 320). This position is also maintained by Stuart Hall (1990) in talking about immigrant experience of identity and negotiating belonging. Which nation-

states facilitate such change depends on the kind of policies these nations embrace and the manner in which they implement them. This goes to prove that the concept of Diaspora operates contingent upon the notion of nation-state. The following discussion will focus on how nation-states deal with challenges of migrant integration in today's context.

## PEOPLE WITH A MULTICULTURAL LEGACY

The ethnic origin of nation-states in the present territorial form is well argued by authors such as Anthony Smith (2004), though others like Benedict Anderson (2006), Ruth Wodak (2009) and Homi Bhabha (1994) argue that the nation is predominantly a discursive construction. However, according to Castles (2002) nation-states as they emerged in the West were predominantly ethnic in nature with the dominant majority having the power to manage ethnic difference and determine the way how minorities belonged to the nation. This is carried out through the setting up of border control mechanism and subordination of minorities through policies of cultural homogenisation as mentioned already (Castells 2011).

Globalisation, a neoliberal capitalist practice weeping across the world, has rendered the idea of national borders shaky causing large scale movement of peoples across these borders. This has forced nation-states and their related institutions to deal with the phenomenon through new discourses and policies. Castles (2002) identifies three main approaches adopted by nations: i) assimilation, ii) differential integration, and iii) multiculturalism. Assimilation, which had once succeeded in America when Europeans migrated and joined their migrated brethren of the same culture (religious culture), was not working anymore. Cultural differences identify immigrants more as religious communities than cultural communities (Modood 1998). Differential exclusion<sup>24</sup> could not work either because those who arrived as temporary guest

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<sup>24</sup> By differential exclusion Castles (2002) classifies a migrant integration approach where people are allowed into the country as temporary workers, assuming that they would return after some time. Such immigrants were integrated temporarily into some sub-systems of the state without any chance to become citizens.

workers, instead of returning to their countries of origin continued to stay. Those who stayed formed cultural, religious and ethnic communities and organisations, built places of worship and strengthened transnational networks utilising dual citizenship options offered by many countries. Thus, the permanent settlement of many immigrants made the immigration receiving nations to reconcile pluralism within, which resulted in devising migrant integration policies. In Britain it has acquired the nomenclature multiculturalism. As Castles defines, "Multiculturalism implies abandoning the myth of homogenous and monocultural nation-states. It means recognizing rights to cultural maintenance and community formation, and linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination" (Castles 2002: 1156).

The direct result of migration is that the myth of a unique and homogeneous, ethnic or linguistic nation cannot be sustained anymore. In other words, all particular (primary) identities are recognised and respected within the universality of national (secondary) identity. Under this logic discrimination based on race, language, culture, country of origin, and religion become untenable. This vastly changes the way migrants view themselves within the country of their adoption while being proud of their cultural heritage. Multiculturalism opens avenues in the civic and political space to form organisations that can confront bigotry and discrimination.

However, multiculturalism still operates within the logic of nation-states and leads to conflicting approaches around migrant belonging as Castles observes:

...multiculturalism can still be seen as a way of controlling difference within the nation-state framework, because it does not question the territorial principle. It implicitly assumes that migration will lead to permanent settlement, and to the birth of second and subsequent generations who are both citizens and nationals. Thus, multiculturalism maintains the idea of a primary belonging to one society and a loyalty to just one nation-state (Castles 2002: 1157).

This precisely is the issue of contention as well as a plank for racially motivated political mobilisation based on fear and suspected (dis)loyalty of immigrants within the national borders. Deployment of discourses pertaining to loyalty, belonging and security can lead to an atmosphere of xenophobic attitudes, exclusionary policies and racist (or communal) violence. Hence, there is need for serious rethinking about the notions of belonging, loyalty and integration within the ambit of multiculturalism which according to Vijay Mishra (2007) should not only take the perspective of managing immigration (or immigrant communities), but also should mean a redefinition of the nation as such where migrant identities are an inclusive narrative. Moreover, South Asian's share a collective memory of multicultural life, in their ancestral lands as well as migrants to other parts of the British Empire from where they have migrated to Britain. This positions them within Britain as a pioneering group with long history of multicultural living. This experience and the normality of such living is expressed by every person whom I interviewed.

#### MULTICULTURAL LIVING: A LEGACY FROM SOUTH ASIA

One of the key memories or experiences that all South Asian immigrants narrate and about which they are all at home with is their multicultural heritage. Being part of South Asia, the cradle of multiple and overlapping cultural heritages in the form of religions, languages and cultural practices, they are at pains to explain how the Partition destroyed the harmony of multicultural, plural living that existed as a natural given. Even those who migrated from Africa speak of multicultural life as something so natural for South Asians everywhere. It is, probably, due to such an experience that they are at home with hybrid identities such as British-South Asian, South Asian-Black etc. Kiswar R recalls from the stories received from her mother about pre-Partition days in Punjab:

Yeah, we were all from the same country. But I never been to India. I like to go. I like to see, especially the places where my mother brought up. She tell me how they go to school and she said they were all... In Patiala there's a lot of monkeys. She said our monkeys...we used to

go to school and monkeys come and climb around and fight on us and she gave the name of...she's telling about the school which they mixed girls and Hindu, Sikh girls--they studied together.

Visram V also narrates his experience as well as the idyllic multicultural ways of living in his village in Gujarat where Partition violence had hardly any effect. If ever some were influenced by the communal conflicts it was due to outside influences. As he recalls:

India is a beautiful country. There are so many castes; but they live as (a) one family. They respect each other; they don't oppose Muslims or Buddhism. Whatever they believe is respected. But these days it is the problem; during that time there was no problem because there were so many Muslims who joined as freedom fighters as well. They live as Indian, not as a Hindu or Muslim.

So the Muslims from Kutch did not leave the area after Partition. In spite of differences in their religious practices which are accepted as normal among various cultural groups in India, there was no special awareness of difference as Visram explains:

Yes. Yes. There were so many families. They come to our house and they work. There is no difference, because there are no thoughts in our mind that they are Muslim and we are Hindu. Let them do their religion, let us do our religion.

This taken for granted manner of multicultural living goes to explain why Partition was such a traumatic experience for everyone belonging to South Asia. Despite such claims of peaceful, multicultural, idyllic, rural life Indian reality of multiculturalism was riddled with conflicts of various kinds. If caste was a serious fissure in the Indian social system at every level, religion was an even more serious faultline throughout Indian history which led to partition. After the partition the frequent communal riots bear witness to this fact. Hence, whatever was claimed as idyllic by Varsani here needs

this qualification of historical corrective. However, to a large extent, as long as the caste (and religious) hierarchy and the power entailed in it remained unquestioned rural life was not communally disturbed.<sup>25</sup> This could have been Visram's experience.

Despite the experiences of sporadic conflicts, Visram's experience of rural, tolerant living has shaped the pluralist, multicultural ethos in the South Asian subcontinent for many millennia. Now, in the West, issues of pluralist living that South Asians have taken for granted emerge as contentious issues in politics where a racial consciousness has started to re-emerge in political and media discourses by way of anti-immigration and Islamophobic discourses. As for the West, which needs to learn to reconstruct the national story as culturally, ethnically and racially plural, the already lived multicultural experience and consciousness of the South Asian migrants could serve as a model. In this context it could be mentioned how overwhelming a role Indian Partition plays in people's memories and how it has been responsible in scarring the collective memory of their multicultural living. Every South Asian wrestles with this memory when they meet.

#### PARTITION: DEFINING AND DETERMINING IDENTITY

The memory of the Partition and the violence following it with the formation of India and Pakistan (and, later, Bangladesh) is an overwhelming emotional baggage that determines the relationship between South Asian communities within the UK. While the first generation of immigrants who directly experienced life before Partition recall a multi-religious life, where people went about their life respecting each other's religious practices while being part of a single culture, the second generation or those who did not directly experience a life prior to Partition have been living with prejudices against other religious communities. Such prejudices appear to be the result of ignorance about others. Kiswar R explains how she viewed people of Hindu or Sikh faith prior to meeting them personally in the UK. It is because the memories of how

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<sup>25</sup> With the Hindutva instigated majoritarian Hindu mobilisations since the 1980s the communal divide has no more remained an urban phenomenon. Communal riots of 1992, 1993 and 2002 Gujarat riots demonstrate this change. With these mobilisations Hindutva forces have managed to bring the Partition of 1947 to every village and town hitherto untouched by communalism.



her own family members suffered during Partition violence, most having lost their lives and an abandoned aunt was converted to Sikhism has shaped her opinion of Indians. Now she realises that there must be more to the story than she is aware of. Recalling communal violence during the Partition she says:

...When I was young I didn't know that. You can't, you...just think... they killed my family, I hate Sikhs and I hate everybody... Hindu... [because] I never saw them [before]. The hate was coming from me from hearing how bad people they were, how they killed my whole family there. But now when you grow you grow bright, thinking and everything, you're thinking. And then I said, 'Well, must be going something from this side as well because the people they gone from Lahore, it's a lot of Hindu and Sikh families living.' But they said when they saw that the people been killed and coming from India then they started in the revenge of that side as well. So I don't know....perhaps that country don't want to be divided; Hindu and Sikhs don't want to be parted their country. And some Muslims took revenge of the families coming.

However, with personal contact between people as individuals much changes in their attitudes towards each other. So was the case with Kiswar. Once she met them (Hindus and Sikhs) in person she changed her perspective. She recalls:

I was hated for a long time for them. When my husband met them I said, 'Oh God, they're cruel people, they are' because this was my experience which I always hear that, 'Oh, the Sikh people they did that to my auntie.' I still sometime the anger come out of me and I said, 'Oh God, they're not very nice, they're very cruel people.' But still I find some nice people as well so it's my mind's changed now a lot but yeah, still something inside is still I'm carrying that, when all they talking about, oh, they want their own....freedom, the Sikh people, I said, 'They did so much to Muslims, now they find one of their own places' and still anger come out of me...yeah, I can say that.

But I found very nice Hindu families, friends as well now, but I never talk about these things with them.

Kiswar, while trying to make sense of all that had happened to her family, still feels affinity to Indians as someone who cannot deny being part of a collective memory of multicultural space that was South Asia once. Certainly, Partition has managed to poison this memory to such an extent that people still try to make sense out this memory.

As a second generation immigrant of Pakistani descent, born and brought up in Cardiff, Nayur Z did hear stories of violence during Partition, though she was not sure if it was all real, because she says that her upbringing with Bollywood movies had provided her with a different perspective about India. Hence, when asked for her view about Hindus and Sikhs, she was quite ambiguous and narrated her own experience of communally mixed life in Cardiff:

I can't really comment so much on that because, like I said, our doctor was Sikh so there was not a concept of 'he's Sikh.' But I also remember that my parents didn't particularly want me to mix with non-Pakistani families but I wouldn't say that was just Hindu or Sikh; that was also non-Muslim, as in the white community. You stick to your own kind mentality. In hindsight, when I look back now, it was trying to preserve what they had because maybe they'd heard stories about what has happened in the past and you don't know what people are capable of doing so it's better to stick to your own. And I couldn't quite understand. I'd say, 'But she's my best friend'. She was a Hindu girl but she was my best friend. And with parents, especially when your parents are from another country and you're brought up in this country, you have a culture shock between yourselves; you have that as well.

So, with the teacher there was never any...those conversations about Sikhs and Hindus never came up. We used to simply go to mosque to learn the Koran and to learn Urdu. And I can't remember the context

of why that conversation came up. I really can't remember but all I remember is that conversation about the trains and this image in my head of Sikh men coming in and chopping off heads. But we grew up with Bollywood movies so we saw another side, but again, I saw people who spoke like me; I saw people who looked like me but wore saris.

So this concept of something terrible happened didn't occur to me because Bollywood films at the time were very much...they were romances or the goodies and the baddies. Mainstream didn't do films on Partition so we didn't know. And usually in films it was always a case of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims always lived together. You'd know some people were Muslim because they'd have the name like Ali or Mohammed and you'd know a Sikh would be a Sikh because he'd have a turban. But they'd all be living happily in a village together. And then in the odd occasion you'd watch a film where there'd be somebody who doesn't like somebody else. Good would prevail and all the villagers would get together and oust the baddie, so whichever religion he was from, so you all thought, well, this is a happy place. I didn't know there was any difference than that.

However, the first generation immigrants were affected by what was taking place in South Asia. The legacy of communalism and Partition is evident in their communal consciousness even in Britain where they came to live. The communal divisions are not merely visible between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. We could also see cultural divisions between Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims. The history of oppression and cultural domination suffered by Bangladeshis (until 1971 East Pakistan) by the ruling West Pakistanis between the periods 1947-1971 make Bangladeshis, if they could manage, not share a mosque with Pakistanis. For that very reason in Cardiff area one could notice Pakistani mosques and Bangladeshi mosques along with others as Mohammad R notes:

When I came there was only one mosque (Arabic) in the Docks. We went there for Friday prayer. Somali mosque. Now every group has mosques. We have our own.”

A similar point is made by Jaswant S who, being a long residing Sikh of Cardiff, speaks of his variant of Sikhism:

...we originate from Sri Lanka and we came to India at the time of our fifth guru, Guru Arjun Dev and we became the Sikh of Guru Nanak when he came to Sri Lanka in 1522. And when our fifth guru sent for some papers from Sri Lanka a lot of our Sikhs came from Sri Lanka to Punjab. And we came down and after...originally I was born in a place called Lahore.

After having migrated to the UK and settled in Cardiff he further speaks of how he and his community of Sikhs went about setting up Gurdwaras. Being one of the most experienced members of South Asian community in Britain, he speaks not only about his own wing of the Sikh community but also about other communities:

And now we have Sikhs in all part[s] of Europe but our community persistently is in Britain. We have thirty-four different Sikh temples throughout Britain which are controlled and run by our Bhatrasi community and there are a couple of hundreds of other Sikh temples. We have sixteen Sikh temples just in Wolverhampton of different communities because if I'm from one community and say there's a big, famous community. And if I go in there they won't give me full rights to be there so what do I do? I get together all my compatriots and open up another temple, and this is what happened in Wolverhampton. We now have three Sikh temple in Cardiff and we have one in Swansea. The second Sikh temple is a breakaway from us because they lived in the other part of city. Okay, because we are never said to object another Sikh temple coming up. And the third one is the people who are from East Africa and they came with a lot of

money because they were educated, who were consultants, who were architects and so on so that's their temple. And things goes on, you see, and we got two, three Hindu temples and a lot of different mosques.

These internal complexities within South Asian communities and even further divisions within Muslim, Hindu or Sikh communities goes to prove that no single identity, based either on ethnicity, religion, language, region or even class, captures adequately the complexity of the South Asian migrant community in the UK. To that extent treating them as a Diaspora community in the typical sense is also a fallacy. My interviews with people of various communities helps one to note this complexity and question any general identity categories such as South Asian Diaspora, migrant, Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh, South Asian to be applied without noting the internal differences. This issue is very important when one speaks of migrant identity, especially when using Islam as primary identity for all Muslims irrespective of the internal complexities among Muslims of various backgrounds and religious affiliations (Halliday 1999). The way one imagines one's homeland also changes according to how one's particular group within the homeland is treated by the majority community and the government. It also depends on how they are represented within the national culture and national identity discourses. Viewed from this perspective, it is more expedient to think of South Asian immigrants living in the UK today through new concepts. To confine them to essentialist diaspora identity predicated upon the construct of nation-states, which is of recent origin, is a short sighted view because it fails to see migrations and dispersions as a human condition throughout human history. Homeland is a myth and, eventually, with more and more migrants down the line adopting the places where they live as their homeland, the concept will not hold the emotional pull to define and maintain boundary as has already happened with many groups of migrants in various places over the centuries (Brubaker 2005). Moreover, migrant practices of negotiating belonging and the adaptations assumed by nation states towards the migrant question show that the old

way of applying the concept of Diaspora does not do justice to the reality of migrant life. What the concept Diaspora does according to Soysal is that it:

...effortlessly casts contemporary population movements as perpetual ethnic arrangements, transactions and belongings. In so doing it suspends immigrant experience between host and home countries, native and foreign lands, home-bound desires and losses – thus obscuring the new topography and practices of citizenship, which are multi-connected, multi-referential and post-national (2000:13).

Despite their early efforts at community formations and continuing Diaspora social practices, their Diaspora consciousness gradually makes way for a hybrid, multifaceted belonging and identification which change over time and circumstances. This does not mean that there is nothing stable. Rather migrant belonging and self-definition is the 'changing same' as described by Cohen while discussing Paul Gilroy (Cohen 2008). This leads one to view South Asians as a community whose migrant practices have moved beyond Diaspora identities.

## THINKING BEYOND DIASPORIC IDENTITIES

Globalisation has brought about not only changes in the patterns of migration but also in the manner in which migrants belong to a nation-state. If multiculturalism is a state response to globalisation, migrants with their transnational community networks and belonging have a different way of perceiving their identities and belonging. Though under the notion of Diaspora most migrations can still be made to fit into the old ways of belonging to a nation, there are other modes that have been emerging which surpass territorial loyalty. Stephen Castles would say: "Transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory" (Castles 2002: 1157). As already discussed, while challenging traditional ideas of nation-state belonging, they also challenge the closed identity as represented by Diaspora as noted by Soysal who argues:

Diaspora is a past invented for the present, and perpetually laboured into shapes and meanings consistent with the present. As such, it exists not as a lived reality but as part of a broader scheme to insert continuity and coherence into life stories that are presumably broken under the conditions of migrancy and exile. It is the reification of categorical homelands, traditions, collective memories and formidable longings. It is a category of awareness, in which present-tense practices lack capacity in and of themselves, but attain significance vis-à-vis the inventiveness of the past (2010:2).

Based on the day-to-day experiences of second generation immigrants as already discussed, citing the experience of Darshini and Varsani's children, given their transnational affiliations and multiple loyalties, the key manner of migrant identity formation and manner of belonging move beyond Diaspora group identities.

For the migrants successful strategies for transnational belonging demand adaptation to multiple social settings as well as multicultural capabilities, a characteristic of the Diaspora which Vertovec calls as a "mode of cultural production" (Vertovec 1999: 19). In a world defined more and more by physical and cultural crossings resulting in pluralist spaces, people with capacity to deal with such situations should not be treated as aberrations or threatening the once homogeneous ethnic space but as highly desirable. Hence, the ideas of primary loyalty to one place make no sense in today's context where citizenship practices are more and more decoupled from "belonging to a national collective" (Soysal 2010: 4). It is here that the South Asians with their multicultural living experience and a transnational consciousness inherent in such a living turn out to be unique contributors to the new conceptions of nationhood in the West.

## DEFYING STEREOTYPES

Much of British multiculturalism debate also focuses on post-war migration as a turning point in British migration history. However, South Asians were already present in the UK for several centuries before and have been contributing to British life in their distinct way of life. From this perspective the continuous immigrations throughout their history show Britain was always multi-cultural and a contested space for political and cultural inclusion even before multiculturalism as a conscious state policy was theorized (Winder 2010; Ranasinha 2013a). South Asians and other recent migrants are the most recent groups that merged with others whose predecessors had migrated to the British Isles before as “Angles, Celts, Danes, Dutch, Irish, Jews, Normans, Norsemen, Saxons, Vikings .....” (Young 1995). Despite their long history of migration South Asian immigrants are also placed within the current immigration discourses prevalent in the UK just like every other immigrants, who are a much derided category of people. However, their history of migration and the way in which they managed to reconstruct their lives after migration, in spite of multiple challenges, are real stories of “a triumph of the human spirit” (Collier 2014). This calls for caution when using the term migrant to all groups of migrants in a reductive and stereotypical way. It is because every story of migration is unique and the factors that lead to such choices are also unique. Hence, lumping together every migrant and all groups of migrants into a single category is misleading and a poor theoretical and policy approach (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2011). The long and many-phased migration of South Asians to the UK and other parts of the world, the varied circumstances and the role of the British in their migration illustrates this complexity. It is for this reason, according to Ranasinha: “Collating and interrogating a range of narratives, stories and fragments of lives tells us more about how South Asians have shaped the fabric of Britain’s political and cultural life than we can glean from monographs and text books alone” (Ranasinha 2013: 4). The interviews that I have conducted provide such a rich and original insight.



## MIGRATION: CHOICE, ADVENTURE, SURVIVAL STRATEGY

For a number of South Asians, impoverished by centuries of a feudal system, caste oppression and colonial rule, economic improvement for the family was a dream that could only be realised by migration and looking for greener pastures. Much of the migration to Africa during the colonial period happened with such intentions and hopes. However, one predominant feature in all such migrations and the labour migrations of South Asians to the Arabian Gulf states after the oil boom of 1970s was that only male members of the family would migrate, living and working as single men while their families remained back home. Family reunions happened only eventually, depending upon the immigration laws in particular countries though such laws are still found to be discriminatory towards low-skilled workers as against the better educated, professional class. Amending the British Nationality Act of 1948, even Britain introduced a law in 2012 that its citizens can marry and bring a spouse into the country only if they earn a minimum of £18,600. This leaves 43% of the Britons, who earn less than that amount, unable to marry and bring in their spouses, as noted by Zoe Williams in a recent *Comment* column in *The Guardian*.<sup>26</sup>

Though migration was a family dream, entire families are made to bear the burden of being divided. Therefore, in some ways, such migrations shattered family unity. Ratna H makes this point at the beginning of his interview:

Father migrated to Kenya and I grew up in Gujarat with my step-mother. When I was 21-22 years of age mother passed away. Did my schooling there till I was 11. Then father took us to Kenya in a steamship.

Sudha V has her family still living in Tanzania while she moved to Uganda after marriage and then came to the UK in 1972. She speaks about the spread of her family:

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<sup>26</sup> Williams Zoe, *The Guardian*, Sunday, 14 December 2014: These days, money buys you a better class of citizenship. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/14/immigration-rule-change-assault-britishness-money-citizenship-rights>, downloaded on 17/12/2014.

I was born and brought up in East Africa. East Africa was home to me. Even today. I've got family in East Africa. My mother is still there. She is 90 and I have got three brothers and a sister still there.

Often migrations were male necessities, adventures or dreams, perhaps necessitated by family financial situations, especially in the case of migrations after the Partition. But, often, they ended up sundering families that left the scourge of loneliness for women in the family because they had to remain back home to bring up children or look after older parents. However, when the women had to join the males, it was an unfamiliar world they were entering into. Vilas P's experience is anecdotal here. Having had her marriage arranged when she was still studying at the university, she had to travel to the UK after finishing her education. She narrates her experience thus:

I got married in March and came to the UK in December. But everything was so sudden, I didn't expect to get married that quickly. When parents agree [...] that time we didn't have the guts to tell them, if they were happy we'd say let's do it. We couldn't tell them we weren't ready. But it was not like torture or anything. Just out of respect.

You had to leave everything. India and UK are so far, you don't expect that you'll be going back every month so you could imagine what the feelings would be like. Now you go so often to India but that time when I came first time I went back to India was after five years, after five years I saw my parents.

That's the thought that was with me the whole journey. During flight thought: 'oh my god, it's going to take me so long to go back' and it's going to be difficult... completely strange place, strange people, strange house because I didn't know anybody here other than my in-laws. Because everything was done in such a rush

The thought of coming to the UK- it was still bugging me-‘oh do I have to go there’?

For males such as Visram V it is the hope of a better life outside India that motivated them to do sacrifices such as family division, because, according to him, in India, in spite of the efforts and hard work, life was hard and any hope of improvement in life situation was limited. He says:

Yes, people always have a dream; and of course, finance-wise, and better life; and other thing is about our children’s life. If you think, because my father who left India (for Africa) and he travelled in only one boat controlled by wind.

(Talking about India) They work hard without much earning.... most of our elder people, they spent life and lost their youth because of the children. Most of their life they spent there.....; only hard work. Their wife and children were in India, and (in Kenya) they were alone..... Our parents lost youth because of us. Then we should do something for our children. That was the reason.

The same motive could be found among others such as Ratna H, Brij P and Wahida’s father who had migrated to the UK under different circumstances. The story of Wahida’s father, who had fought for the British during the Second World War, (having been posted to fight the Japanese in Burma (Myanmar), he had been shot in the eye and went missing as prisoner of war for about eight years). He was offered citizenship in the UK. Wahida recalls why he had migrated. She says, he would mention that “the streets of Britain were paved with gold”. The imagined affluence of Britain made him choose to come to the UK.

If for some migration was an adventure and a way of seeking a better life, for those who were expelled from East African countries, such as Uganda in the 1970s, it wasn’t something that they had intended. They had to decide within weeks where they would

go. Being British citizens from British Colonies or Protected Territories and having the possibility to migrate to the UK, they decided to arrive here.

But, in the case of those professionals such Dr Mohammed H of Ebbw Vale, Dr Uzair of Newport and Dr Maya R it was an opportunity offered by globalization and the shortage of skilled workers in Britain that led them to migrate to Britain. However, for most of them, Mohammad R who had migrated from Bangladesh, Nayur's parents who had migrated from Pakistan and Wahida's father, it was the work opportunities arising out of post-World War II reconstruction of Britain. For many women, though, migration and living in Britain was neither intended nor dreamt of by them. With migration most of them lost family and community support. For some not only the climate of Britain, which they found difficult to live with, but also the poverty and the poor living conditions that they had to suffer made it less than desirable. As Vimla P recalls:

I missed Africa a lot. I didn't like it here at all. If they (referring to African countries from where they were forced to migrate) allow us to go back, we'll go back. We didn't like the weather; we didn't like the food. But people were very friendly.

Weather... and the life-style over there. It is easy life..... It wasn't stressful life there like we have now here. We had it much easy. People used to work for us. Here we have do everything ourselves.

Besides such sudden changes that she had to face, it was the shame of being reduced to a state of refugee when they arrived and the horrible living situation that they had to survive that made migration all the more undesirable for Vimla P. As she further narrates:

Because we didn't like state hand-outs when we came to Cardiff, we stopped claiming it. Straightaway he looked for a job and he got a job in a restaurant peeling onions.... We were 16 people living in a 2 and

half bedroom house. No central heating, no carpets. Only one guest fire and two electrical fires. So living in overcrowded situation, counting pennies, didn't have cars..... But got good advice and support from Doctor's surgery..... (The receptionist at the medical centre was Welsh).

The diverse causes, reasons and conditions that facilitated or forced South Asians to migrate to Britain have also played an important role in how they approach the limitations and opportunities offered by Britain in reconstructing their life. Contrary to the media generated myths and stereotypes about immigrants, in almost every instance that I interviewed, one could notice an effort to find a job, whatever that is, as long as they do not have to suffer the ignominy of surviving on state hand-outs or dependence on others.

#### NO SHIRKERS AND SCROUNGERS

The South Asian's identity perception in Britain is a product of their long history of engagement with Britain, especially as colonial power, their participation in imperial wars, their contribution to British economy by way of labour and, more recently, by investing in British economy by setting up or taking over British businesses. It is also a product of their engagement with Britain through their participation in social movements in Britain such as suffragette movement, trade union movement, Irish Home Rule movement, as well as the struggle for Indian Independence. From this point of view South Asian identity as British citizens considerably differs from other immigrant groups (Brah 1996). Also, it can be seen as a product of the play of exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics within British society, in its treatment of immigrants and the tactics of engagement or resistance employed by South Asians towards these dynamics. Inclusion or exclusion of immigrants into the category of Britishness is a selective deployment of discourses deployed by the State according to its political and economic interests at different times based on its class and race ideology. This pattern of discourse about immigration continues even today affecting

the manner of migrant integration (Balibar 2005). The British approach to immigration swayed in both directions, between inclusion in times of need for labour and exclusion in times of economic depression. Also, it is favourable towards those with money to invest as well as those with professional skills while discriminatory towards others whose skills are redundant (Winder 2010). As Ranasinha notes, South Asians were an asset as soldiers during the two great wars, but soon they turned out to be a liability during peace time where the country suffered high unemployment due to economic depression. Hence, immigration discourses vacillate between immigrants being good for some reasons at certain times and as threats to white workers and the benefit system at other times (Ranasinha 2013: 23). This pattern of strategic deployment of immigration discourses continue even today and South Asians in Britain continue to deploy their politics against such discourses. These struggles continue to form part of their self-definition within British society.

Against such instrumentalist discourses of the British state, my own interviewees in this research narrate their struggles to belong by way of economic, cultural and social participation effected through the formation of cultural communities of mutual support. In story after story, what becomes evident is the shock and pain of displacement, dreams and hopes of a better life, and the struggles and successes from hard work that made them what they are today, the British South Asians. Contrary to the prevailing British immigration discourses of today none showed knowledge of any state benefits upon which they could count on at the time of migration. Instead, if they dreamed of something, it was the desire of finding jobs. Such lack of knowledge about the availability of benefits of whatever kind prevailed because concepts of social security were alien to them in the country of their origin such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh or East Africa. For many, Britain was not even the preferred destination after expulsion from East Africa as they were unclear if they should return to India or seek asylum in other countries such as Canada. Many could not return to India, the country of their ancestors, because they had been migrants for generations and they hardly had anything to do with South Asian countries of their ancestral origin. That left them with little choice but to choose Britain as the country of destination. This part

of their story defies the popular and stereotypical allegation that migrants are attracted to Britain because of British benefit-system. Vimla P remembers even today the feelings of helplessness when her family arrived in the UK and also the shame she suffered because they had to accept state support as refugees. Despite the diverse routes that they took to migrate to the UK none speak of any understanding of UK benefit-system. They had migrated either with dreams and hopes of finding jobs and improving their life situation or to escape persecution. That there is social security in Britain was only a subsequent experience as in the case of Vimla P.

Vimla P was born in 1952 in Kampala, Uganda, migrated to the UK in 1972 after Idi Amin expelled the Asians. While she recalls the warm welcome she and her family had received at Heathrow when they arrived and the subsequent accommodation offered to them at a refugee camp where they had to live, she cannot forget the shame that she and her family felt when they had to receive £2.20 state support. She narrates her feelings thus:

Next day at the camp the staff offered us £2.20. We accepted it but we felt like beggars; because in Uganda we never asked anything from anyone. And .... over here we didn't have anything; and didn't even know that they will give us that amount of benefit. And that day we decided that we better go to Cardiff, look for a job so that we don't depend on government hand out. (They were initially located in a very small town over there in Somerset).

Her feelings of helplessness and shame had a reason because she belonged to a community had strong anchoring within their community and caste networks. They either had jobs or family businesses. Many of them had professional education and family networks. Yet, against their will, they found themselves displaced and ended up in refugee camps in Britain where they had little choice but accept government support. Many of them, especially women, narrate the shame of accepting help from the state and other people though they are ever grateful for this help. To escape from

such helpless and shameful situation it was, once again, their family and community networks in Britain that came to their rescue. As Vimla P recalls:

... [F]amily members came to visit us in the camp. They asked us to come to Cardiff and promised to help us settle down. So we decided to come here.

Sudha V was born in 1942 in Tabora, Tanzania and eventually, after her education in India, got married and went to live in Uganda with her husband. They decided to migrate to the UK because she says, “we had no choice but to come here because we were British passport holders. We belonged to Britain. We didn’t belong to India, we didn’t belong to Uganda. We had to come to Britain”. When they arrived in the UK she was poor and pregnant with her second child. In such a helpless situation she says a Scottish family adopted them and supported them in every manner. The family solicited help from the local community in Cardiff which helped generously as she gratefully recalls:

It was very difficult. It wasn’t easy. It was.... mind you I must admit, having said that, having the British rule in India and all that, when we came here from Uganda people in Wales were very very very kind and helpful. And we were taken under the wing of a particular family who helped us a lot. It’s 41 years now we (are) still in touch with them and he has made recordings of all our events when we came in, you know how they took us under the wing and everything.

But they were very very kind..... and they announced in the church that they were helping this small family from Uganda. If anybody has anything to offer..... because I have just conceived my son and I was expecting him.

People came with bags full of stuff for us: clothes, semi new clothes and all. For the first year of my son’s life, a whole year I did not buy anything; even



Terri-nappies I was given by people. And I couldn't afford to be proud. But people were very very kind. Very generous.

So the South Asians who arrived here were completely unaware of any state benefits that they could depend on for survival. If they did receive and accept it, that was due to their helplessness and with a sense of shame. Such feelings prompted them to take matters in their own hands and try to address their situation which most of them did through their family and community networks, which are hallmarks of most immigrant groups as noted by Massey et al (1993).

#### MALES, FEMALES, HARDWORKING, RISK-TAKING

Every person that I interviewed shared the struggle that they went through to find a job and the pride that they felt in a job or owning a business. A point to note is that men who arrived for the post-war reconstruction of the country were employed predominantly in unskilled or semi-skilled sectors. Even among those who arrived from Africa in the '70s, men had difficulties finding jobs suitable to their education and skills, though women found better jobs if they were prepared to work. In traditional Indian households women were generally considered housewives. However, once they migrated to the UK families couldn't manage to live with incomes from low paid jobs that the male members managed to find necessitating women to enter into the job market (Brah 1996). Detesting the idea of any government hand-outs women decided to take up jobs that came their way. Given the religio-cultural heterogeneity that characterised South Asians and the culturally defined gender roles, the pattern of employment among women belonging to different communities varies. While Hindu and Sikh women from Indian origin were well represented in paid employment which in the 1970s even exceeded that of the white women, it was not so prevalent among women from Pakistan and Bangladesh, though this could be explained by their later arrival as migrants than their Indian counterparts. However, once women enter the world of gainful employment they become more aware of their contribution and the family dynamics change dramatically as shown by Monica Ali (2008) in her novel, *Brick Lane*. A stereotypical image of a subservient, home-making,

child-bearing, diminutive South Asian woman finds little evidence among immigrant women from South Asia as many of the interviewees illustrate. In reality, women's role was equal to men as bread earners and home makers, besides being child bearers and child care takers. Their migrant situation and opportunities to take up gainful employment in this new social context have helped them become independent even to the extent of divorcing their husbands of arranged marriages which is illustrated by Wahida's mother. At a certain stage of her life she decides to divorce her husband and dares to live alone with her four children. Given her background as a Pakistani Muslim, despite having a job while married, she was able to make such radical decisions because of the social security and support afforded by the British state and a job that she was offered at the local Surgery. This desire to look for jobs is a hallmark of South Asian immigrant community.

Vimla P speaks of their desire to find work and be self-sufficient as a family. She says:

We were ready to take up any job. Even I wanted to work. When I had to tell them that I was to have a baby then they would say 'there is no job for you'. Then I had to wait until my child is born and then I started looking for a job. I found a job in a little store.

With her job she supplemented her husband's income which was insufficient despite his long hours of work. She recalls:

He worked 14 hours a day Monday to Friday: morning 8 till 10 in the evening. So he hardly saw our children. Only time he played with the children was during the weekend.

Because we didn't like state hand-outs when we came to Cardiff we stopped claiming that. Straightaway he looked for a job and he got a job in a restaurant peeling onions....

Sudha V also narrates how it was difficult to find appropriate jobs for both her husband and herself. Both were teachers, educated and employed as teachers in Uganda. They could not find teaching jobs. They could not afford to wait for suitable jobs as the family needed income to survive. Hence, her husband had to do odd jobs until he qualified to drive Cardiff Busses which he did for a decade. She says:

My husband had more problems getting a job here because he was.... We were both teachers in Uganda.... My husband was an art graduate from Uganda.... When we came here because I was expecting my son I couldn't get a job straight away. And with my husband there was nothing in the art field for him in commercial art field. So he had a couple of jobs here and there for a couple of weeks. And then he gave up in the end and he started driving the buses. He started as a conductor in the bus and then he drove after he qualified as a driver and then he did that for about nine and half years and then we bought our own shop. That's like most Indians we end up with a shop sort of you know. And he did that for 16-17 years.

Eventually they started their own business. However, she herself had it much easier to find a better job. She says:

I had no problem finding a job because of my qualification. I got a job in the Revenue. My first job with first interview and that's where I retired after 30 years.

Their situation demanded that they take up whatever jobs were available to earn a living and none shirked from taking up jobs and none remained impoverished or resorted to self-pity. Suhel R, who was born in Bangladesh in 1959 and, having married a British citizen, had to migrate to the UK in 1991. Despite his limitations with the English language he had managed to work always because he sees value in work and is proud to be a working person rather than depending on state support. He had

studied law and had his own business in Bangladesh but, after his migration to the UK, he resorted to very different jobs such as being a kitchen helper in a restaurant, then a chef at a restaurant. Eventually for reasons of poor health he became a taxi driver which he continues to do for the last fourteen years. He states:

I don't like to depend.... that was my aim always; until now I'm working myself hard. Sometimes in this country they give you facilities, don't have to work but I am a working person.

People worked long hours, lived frugally, saved money and many ended up owning their own businesses. Mahammad R, born in 1942, in East Bengal migrated to the UK in 1963 and has been living in Cardiff ever since. Though obtaining a visa was relatively easy, finding a job after arriving here was not that easy. He had to wait for three months before he got into a factory in Cardiff Docks. As the job was difficult - he calls it a very dirty job because it was all dusty- he worked there only for three and half years and left it to start a business with another partner from Bangladesh. He continued with this business for 12 years before he bought and managed his own grocery shop which he managed for another 12-13 years until his health failed.

In most cases of first generation South Asian migrants, the mismatch between qualifications and employment in Cardiff resulted in their becoming entrepreneurs.

Jaswant S migrated to the UK along with his parents as a result of Partition in 1947. Settling first in Sutton, Cambridgeshire, and then moving to London and finally settled in Cardiff, where he has lived for the last sixty years. Jaswant S recalls his father opening the first Indian grocery shop in Cardiff, first among many groceries that would open eventually. He recalls his experiences of personally delivering grocery to houses:

At that time people in Cardiff didn't used to even be able to buy chapatti flour. I used to go to Birmingham every week and have it on order. People used to come and say, 'I need a bag of flour.' We used to have a big van so I used to fetch between five and ten bags every week for people to have.

South Asians' effort at finding jobs or setting up small businesses to become economically independent shows how hard they work and desire to settle down. It happened in a social setting that was away from home and offered space and opportunity for women to participate in gainful employment and support their families. This certainly offered women an economic role which brought with it freedom from old customs and inherited practices, even among Muslim families (Ali 2008). However, hard work or not, most South Asian immigrant families initially had to experience downward social mobility.

### HARD WORK, DOWNWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY

One of the key themes emerging from most South Asian narratives is a slide in their social status when they arrive in the UK. Every story is about how almost everyone ended up doing jobs that they had not done in the past because either their families were better off or they were well educated or had businesses prior to their migration. Most of the employment that they obtained consisted of hard manual labour. This is especially the case with those who migrated from East Africa. However, even those who migrated from the Subcontinent enjoyed a better social and economic status prior to their migration. In the case of many, dreams of higher education were dashed immediately on their arrival requiring them to take up any available job in order to keep their self-respect and avoid dependency.

Ratna H arrived in the UK with the intention to studying further. However, as soon as he arrived, he had to seek employment. As already mentioned, Wahida's father had served in the British Colonial Army in the Second World War in a higher position. Despite having such an experience when he arrived in the UK, he found himself working as a factory worker. So is the case with Suhel R who had migrated to the UK in 1991 on marriage to an already settled Bangladeshi lady in the UK, had studied law back home and also owned a business there. After coming to Britain he had to start as a helper in a restaurant kitchen, then became a chef and finally ended up self-employed as a taxi driver for the last 14 years. The same hardworking approach to life

is expressed by Vimla P when she narrated her husband's early jobs and hours of work which was also the lot of most migrants.

The case of Brij P is most illustrative of this change in social position. With a Masters degree in Agricultural Sciences, Brijpaul had joined the Indian Army and was captain when he decided to quit and come to the UK to do his Doctoral studies. However, due to arriving late in the year he could not pursue his education and ended up working as a market research interviewer. After having married a lady from among the early migrant families of South Asian origin, he recalls how his in-laws continuously urged him to take up a factory job which he did not. But eventually he worked for the Metropolitan Police in London as a police officer. However, that took a long time and effort because as a migrant it took quite an effort to understand the ways of applying for a proper job and the required confidence to face an interview.

The story from Sudha V also speaks of the difficulty her husband went through to find an appropriate job despite being an art graduate and an Art teacher in Uganda as already mentioned.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION BUT POOR SOCIAL MOBILITY

If the above examples show how the South Asian immigrants coped with life in the early stages of their migration hoping to make their lives better, with time and persistence things did change for them. Over the years though some became very successful, most become downwardly mobile by reduced opportunities. If this is true of recent arrivals, the situation is no better for migrants who arrived at different times in the past. Even the subsequent generations suffer this disadvantage as most recent data gathered from a research conducted at Manchester University shows. The findings, published in *The Guardian*, state: "Britain's ethnic minorities still face significant barriers to social mobility despite many having better qualifications than their white counterparts ...." (Sedghi 2014: 1). Probably, that is the reason why most of them had to be self-employed, especially as taxi drivers, a situation that continues to this day. It is evident from the fact that 56% Pakistani men worked in transport

sector as taxi drivers compared to 8% of the general population as Sedghi (2014) observes.

If the situation of earlier and first generation migrants is one of a slide in social status, the experience of the second generation and more recent South Asians arriving to the UK in the recent two decades is much more poignant but least researched. In this category fall the middle class young migrants coming to the UK for higher education with a degree but ending up in poverty and disillusionment due to the dashed hopes of earning money and skills with a British degree. Most of them are forced to take up low paid jobs, live in extremely poor conditions and return home empty handed or with considerable debt. Hence, the experience of young Indian migrants in terms of social mobility is contrary to their dreams of a better life in the UK (Rutten and Verstappen 2013). If the first generation migrants, in spite of a slide in their social and economic situation, took any job and built up their lives, the second generation migrants are not accepting their fate. This aspect of the migrant reality in Britain calls for further research as the discontent and exclusion experienced by them could have implications on issues of national integration and security, an area I could not investigate due to limitation of time and the scope of my research.

#### SOUTH ASIAN CHALLENGE: SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Most of the South Asians who arrived in the UK with higher education and professional experience ended up doing low paid, manual jobs as they began their life in the UK. However, as years passed by they tried to become self-sufficient and independent. Some of them ended up having better paid jobs and some others managed to set up their own businesses. All the stories illustrate this risk taking and adventurous streak among the migrants. It also illustrates the limitations migrants face in recovering from the loss of living standards that they suffered after moving to Britain.

In the case of those that migrated from Africa, most had lost a life that was built there over several decades of hard work. In some cases they were successful entrepreneurs

who had lost everything and it took a very long time to rebuild life here as Hari P, (who was born in 1949 in Uganda and lived there until 1972 when his family had to migrate to the UK), explains:

It took us almost twenty years to settle down and to get back to where we were in Uganda. So we were thrown back twenty years.

If the story of hard work, frugal living and eventual ownership of small businesses is typical of South Asians in the UK, there are bigger successes among the interviewees. Hari P started working at a petrol station but eventually owned several of them. It goes to prove further my earlier reference to available data about South Asian businesses and their contribution towards jobs creation in London alone.<sup>27</sup> According to research quoted by the BBC, South Asian family owned businesses are less likely to suffer at times of economic recession as a result of their financing and managing structure. Dr Malcolm Chapman, senior lecturer in international business at the University of Leeds argues:

Asians tend to finance business internally or use capital from family derived networks; crucially those networks are tolerant of slow repayment of loans if slow repayments become necessary, because many are family-run concerns, they become a sort of life-support system and you don't switch that off because it's not just about making profit that goes to some anonymous shareholder<sup>28</sup>.

All this goes to prove that South Asian immigrants to the UK are hard-working and risk-taking rather than waiting for government hand-outs to manage their lives. Their family support and community networks have been at the root of their entrepreneurial success.

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<sup>27</sup> This report was published by Greater London Authority in 2005. According to which at the time of the reporting period i.e. 2004, there were 39,000 Asian owned businesses employing 300,000 people with £60 billion turnover.

<sup>28</sup> As reported by Sanjiv Buttoo, BBC Asian Network: Family ties help Asian businesses in UK, published on 12 January 2012 in <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-16526590>, downloaded on 10th December 2014.



## CONCLUSION

Most arguments about migration adopt either economic-instrumentalist or social-communitarian approach. If the former endorses open door migration, the latter is for closed door approach. Both approaches suffer from proceeding from value judgements based on the prevalence of poverty in the world and dangers of nationalism and racism rather than on hard evidence of historical, economic or socio-political factors such as those that I have tried to indicate above. Hence, they fail to come up with a coherent policy to understand the globalised nature of the world, the ever present phenomenon of immigration and its role within international economic networks as they have done in the case of capital and its movement. In order to arrive at a more balanced approach, migration should be approached from the perspective of three groups of people: the migrants themselves, those that are left behind, and the indigenous populations of host countries. Given their Diaspora character and identity politics the immigrants adopt in various circumstances, their impact will be multifaceted and multinational defying the old logic of nation-states. In the end, given the nature of nation-states and the ideologies that dominate national politics in various countries at a particular time, the social effects rather than economic ones will determine immigration policies (Collier 2014). This issue is well illustrated in the manner of support the anti-immigration parties have been receiving in immigration receiving countries of Europe and even countries such as Australia and the USA where economic arguments favour the necessity of free movement of labour, but the migrant resistant discourses continue to erect more barriers. However, the world is changing, changing fast. Movement of people across borders is increasing and the traditional concept of the nation-state is gradually giving way to new ways of conceiving citizenship and belonging. In the present context, given the scale of migration and resultant new modes of belonging, *Homo sapiens* has turned *Homo migrans* engendering a Diaspora consciousness that does not rest at boundary maintenance but merely identifies with issues and interests that matter to humanity as a whole. The apparent identity wars that erupt everywhere do not deny the fact that humanity is evolving in a new direction which can neither be controlled by the logic of nation-states nor by the logic of identity politics.

## MIGRATION: A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS?

Once the migrants decide to move away from their home, it turns out to be a seminal experience which makes further movement easy. Hence, one can notice that migrants are more mobile once they settle in a new country. They could often move to new, unknown places if that place offers better opportunities to set up home. It could be said that migration engenders a new consciousness which is most celebrated among the elite, the literate, and the cosmopolitan of the globalised world. However, such cosmopolitan approach is not the staple of ordinary, economic migrants (Ahmed 1999). This might be true in some sense because my interviewees exhibit a trait which can be termed as readiness to move if there are better opportunities. Moreover, migration as a consciousness is premised upon breaking boundaries and making oneself at home anywhere without the burden of clinging to identities as security. This could be easy for the elite who do not suffer the hurdles that ordinary migrants have to face when they cross borders or settle in new places. In spite of such disadvantages the adventurous streak that originates with the first generation migrants makes it easier for the following generations to emulate. The example of the Vikram V's family where the second generation has migrated to Australia and even Vikram and his wife who are prepared to move suggests a very positive view of migration. As he explains:

It (migration) is beneficial..... One thing is, people who do not migrate do not advance so fast. If you want to know, you have to migrate. People who migrated from their country, they developed fast..... In India even if you get educated you have no chance to get a job. People who migrated to Kenya got educated, then they came here.

Certainly, if one experiences migration once, further movements become easy to deal with. Jaswant S's family and their multiple internal migrations within the UK over the last six decades is an example. Besides family connections looking for better opportunities is the key motivating factor that drives immigrants to move to different places.

The narratives from the memories of South Asians show how migration is a complex process that envelopes human society in its many facets. Migration is not just a macro-economic issue of globalisation or a result of postcolonial poverty, but it is also a history of expulsion, violence, displacement, devastation, alienation and adventure. It is an issue affecting multiple countries and their self-definition forcing them to adapt to new realities. It is an issue affecting not only those who migrate but also those who are left behind and, more importantly, those communities who had to make enormous adjustments and sacrifices to accommodate people who are culturally alien in some sense. In every way, it is a complex issue and the migrants as such are complex groups and individuals who need to be viewed and understood as unique. In the final analysis, migration affects society at every level demanding from communities and individuals to view themselves in the new context and define themselves according to the new ways of belonging that is necessitated by new situation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ROOTS AND ROUTES: MIGRANT IDENTITY AND BELONGING

*"The essence of immorality is the tendency to make an exception of myself."*

- Jane Addams, American Author

#### INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the discussion focused on why people migrate and what happens to them when they migrate to a new place with special reference to the experiences of South Asian migrants to the UK. Here the focus will be on how their journeys and struggles on their arrival to belong to new communities and nations influence the way they see themselves and the world. This refers to the resultant identity or identities that migrants assume to deal with the social contexts they choose to enter. The main aim of a migrant's attention to her identity is to understand the self and the community, to negotiate one's belonging in the country of settlement and to politically mobilise resources to expand one's terms of existence. This process is not merely personal and communitarian, but intensely political. I address this issue by comparing the identity perceptions of two generations of South Asians<sup>29</sup> living in South Wales, UK, against the narrative and discursive construction of South Asian identity in Britain since their arrival in diverse circumstances over a few centuries.

Literary and global celebrations of migration, nomadic urbanism, cosmopolitanism, exile, border transgressions etc. were once fashionable theoretical pursuits. Conditions of postmodern living with deterritorialised capital or 'capital beyond borders' have opened avenues for people to view human subjectivity as defined by mobility. However, it has offered different options to different categories of people as John Noyes puts it: "The global economy today seems to produce two mobile life styles as the limit conditions of subjectivity," one for the 'nomad millionaires' and the other for

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<sup>29</sup> As already mentioned, here the term 'South Asians' refers only to those who arrived in the UK from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Srilankans, Nepalese and other South Asians are not included in the present research, though the issues of identity and belonging discussed here may equally apply to them.

the 'nomad refugee or migrant'. If for the former it is a lifestyle of choice, for the latter it is a strategy of survival often imposed upon by circumstances. The governments of today operate under separate rules differentiating "the mobile-rich from the mobile-poor, mobility's executive branch from the mobile-disciplined," those who imagine themselves outside history and time from those who are victims of history and time (Noyes 2004: 160). This differential treatment is evident in the visa and residence permit regimes, immigration discourses and security operations, especially in the Western countries. Migrants, especially economic migrants, along with refugees, being "late capitalism's nomadic refuse" (Noyes 2004: 166), are a special target of such discourses and policies. Against such stereotyping, exclusionary and racist representations the migrants have to struggle to negotiate their belonging where they venture to go and reside in order to construct their identities and deploy them variously.

Basing on their own or the inherited memories and lived experiences of migration and settlement we could examine how the immigrants' identities are shaped by the stories they tell about themselves. After a short discussion on the theoretical clarification on the use of the concept identity, two contrasting perspectives will be taken up: First, the prevalent, dominant narratives about immigrants with special reference to South Asians and, second, the narratives migrants construct about themselves. This raises two sets of questions, namely, how are migrants represented in the dominant discourses of a society and in particular in British society? Or what identity/identities is/are ascribed to them? The rest of the section will focus on the memory narratives of South Asians to see how they represent themselves, often in contrast to the given identity positions. The questions addressed include: How did the South Asian immigrants view the existing communities or the nation? How do they see themselves in UK as immigrants? Did their self-understanding and understanding of the existing communities undergo change over time? What shaped them? What are the experiences of the second generation? Do they differ from their parents or co-ethnics? How do they identify themselves today living in multicultural Wales in UK?

Identity is seen in three main ways: Firstly, it is a mode of understanding oneself (valuing the past and the importance of roots); secondly, it is a ground for negotiating ones belonging to and interactions with communities; and, thirdly, it is a strategic means to mobilise politically. The discussion in this chapter contains these three objectives. Throughout this discussion the key perspective will be to argue against any kind of essentialist perception of identity that one might think is a solution to the problems the migrants of different backgrounds face in the UK or anywhere in the world<sup>30</sup>.

Hence, in today's globalised, postmodern world, it is important to understand what role one's identity plays. Being in the frontline of globalisation, how do migrants understand and deploy it/them (identities) in their efforts to belong? What role discourses about nations, borders and immigration play in the construction of migrant identities?

## MAKING SENSE OF IDENTITY

Human life is lived in flux or continuous change and to make sense of this change as well as to find ground of stability we continually search for things that are permanent by weaving our past as a continuous process. Our memory is that part of us which offers this continuity and hence functions as the ground of our identity. Individual memory, being part of collective memory, employs social frames of a cultural collective for retention and recall and thus aids the process of identity construction (Halbwachs 1992). In a world that is characterised as postmodern, plural, democratic, multicultural and multi-nodal there is serious suspicion about all grand narratives that once positioned themselves as universal stories that represented all (Lyotard 1984). Today no one can claim to possess truths that one can impose on others as universal

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<sup>30</sup> Here one needs to keep in mind the impact upon the immigrants, especially Muslims, of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America which initiated the War on Terror that has been continuing against the Muslims all over the world, the Western support to Israeli bombing against Palestinians over the years, the contradictory discourses of the West that support some Authoritarian rulers and punish others, and the most recent phenomenon of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq-Syrian borderlands attracting Western Muslims. In recent years immigrant Muslim identity is largely shaped against such campaigns and discourses.

values, let alone act on them without respecting other ways of perceiving reality, though some powerful countries still try to do so at the cost of peace or under the pretext of civilising the world or establishing peace in the world (Spivak 1999). The intensification of globalization and the neoliberal economic order of the last three decades has not only destabilised all kinds of boundaries, whether they are national, religious or cultural, but have also rendered the nation-states powerless in many of their traditional functions such as control over territory, security, populations and economy (Habermas 2001). In doing so, the forces of globalization have destabilised the very identity of nations. The concomitant migration of large number of people has contributed to this destabilisation and that has been affecting communities locally as well as nationally (Beck 2006). Life for those, who move from their homeland searching for better pastures, forced either by circumstances beyond their choice or by choice, arriving into a new land and negotiating one's survival there, is equally destabilising. Hence, discourses about identity are a "postmodern predicament of contemporary politics" everywhere. Identity becomes "an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Mercer 1990: 43). Most countries and communities experience this problem today.

Precisely because people experience unprecedented change in their lives they invest so much energy on issues pertaining to their identity because "personal identity plays an indispensable role in human life. It acts as an intellectual and moral compass, guides one's choices and actions and makes them coherent and consistent" (Parekh 200 : 12). However, identities do not hold their sway over individuals and groups as they did once. It is because we live in a time when every identity category such as 'man', 'black', 'work', 'nation' or 'community' is in flux and is "regarded in some sense as being more contingent, fragile and incomplete and thus more amenable to reconstitution than was previously thought possible" (Du Gay et al 2000: 1-2). This illustrates the functional and evolving character of identity which is its permanent feature allowing its multiple alignments to emerge in the socio-political arena. This functional and evolving character of identity is most visible in the life of immigrants

(Hall 2002). So, instead of denying those things that hold a migrant's centre (memory of one's roots), identity helps evolve and transform one's self-understanding. The precise nature of such stability and evolution is well illustrated in the life-experiences of Karim Murji (2008), a migrant of multiple journeys, which I discuss in the following section.

## IDENTITIES: INTERACTIVE ROOTS AND ROUTES

For Murji migrant identity is a complex interaction between their 'roots' (where they come from) and the 'routes' that they traverse as migrants. Identity construction is an interplay between both these dynamics depending on circumstances. However, in the case of migrants, despite the dominance of roots as identity markers in the early stage of their belonging, over a period, due to multiple movements and continuous negotiations, their identity is formed much more by the routes that the migrant self chooses to journey in the course of one's life (Murji 2008). It is an example of how identities are more a product of the journeys one undertakes to make places of our temporary or permanent arrival as homes. Due to multiple journeys, how a migrant's identity and feelings of being at home are never anchored is described by Sarah Ahmed (1999) by referring to Leela Dhillon's (1993) story where Dhillon explains how she finds herself secure and with a sense of purpose at airports and air terminals because that which one called home once exists no more and there are many that one calls home but without feeling really being at home in them. Hence, it is the airports or points of transit that are seen as locations of hope.

Murji (2008) shows how multiple migrations affect one's self-understanding differently. Taking recourse to his own personal experiences he explores the complexity of his own identity as being someone of Indian (South Asian) ancestry and migrated to the UK from East Africa. Despite being of Indian descent, he does not see India as his home as there is no home there anymore, but is attached more to his place of birth in Tanzania. However, in the UK he has no adequate categories to choose: he is forced to be either African British or Asian British, yet neither of them fit with what he perceives as his identity. Therefore, he says, it feels like being inside and outside



particular identities and nations or continents. This experience of tension between the given identity and the felt identity is a typical characteristic of migrant life.

Murji's experience is theorized by Jones & Krzyzanowski (2011) who stress upon migration as a complex phenomenon and propose the view that different and multiple migrations impact variously on the types of identity that migrants assume. If the first generation of the South Asians migrated to the UK from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh directly, another migration of South Asians to the UK took place via Africa as discussed in Chapter 1 and 4. Many of these migrants were born in Africa which they considered their home but were forced to leave and, instead of returning to India, migrated to the UK. For them 'roots' provoke troubled and painful memories, complicating further their sense of who they are. This multiple migration complicates one's self-understanding and is not just unique to South Asians from Africa but is also experienced by those who migrated to Pakistan from India after Partition.

This complication of one's self-understanding is central, for example, to Dr. Uzair's present identity after he moved to Britain from Pakistan his place of domicile since the Partition. Prior to the Partition his family had lived in Uttar Pradesh in India. He describes how he still feels as an Indian and not Pakistani because he was not born in Pakistan and does not conform to any Pakistani ethnic identities such as Sindhi, Balochi or Punjabi. He comments:

I think...thinking as Pakistani (is) very difficult because we still think of ourselves as Indian [laughing]. It's a silly answer because we have Pakistani just Punjabi, Sindhi, Bhutan, Balochi ..... We are none of that; therefore we are now called Mohajer (migrants). And really they still...we are separate, we like to be called that because we can't say I'm Sindhi or I'm Punjabi or I'm Bhutan in the same way you were born here. I've lived here most of my life; I'm British, all my life has been in this country but I still would call myself ..... I am Welsh or I am English or I'm Scottish. We are a distinct race...

That multiple migrations affect one's identity uniquely is also apparent from the narrative of Sudha V, who was born in Tabora, Tanzania (Africa) in 1942. She tells her story of going back to India for her University education, where she got married in 1969 and migrated to Uganda and then again to the UK in 1972. As a result, like Murji, due to her multiple migrations she finds herself belonging 'nowhere' as she says:

Isn't it funny ... we don't belong anywhere. This is a shame isn't it?  
We do feel something towards Wales more than England and  
Scotland, like people were kind to us and everything. But I'm an  
Indian at heart.

These are clear examples of people longing for fixed identities but due to their multiple migrations, evolved into fluid identities. Murji (2008) tries to explore how the relationship between fixed and fluid identities in the lives of migrants operates. He calls those identities that refer to one's 'roots' as 'essentialised identities' as against those that one attaches to the 'routes' one traverses in life as 'plastic' identities. He further argues that how one's identity is being perceived by the migrant or/and the state apparatuses has serious policy implications. Most national discourses about immigration try to ascribe fixed identities based on people's roots, the discourses that play into the hands of forces that try to stereotype, categorise and politicise the issues about migration. In this process, according to Murji, identities based on 'roots' are more susceptible to be racialized because they are "ascribed fixed", whereas those based on 'routes' are "felt fluid" offering multiple identity positions and hence become valuable political tools in the hands of migrants to contest the prevalent, racialized and exclusionary discourses. Hence, migrant identity is an outcome of the pull and push of forces, but very often it is determined more by how others see it rather than the inner 'psycho-dynamic' experiences of the individual. In this process of pull and push dynamics, identities based on routes are more open and fluid than the apparent fixities identified with roots.

However, despite their seeming opposition both the identities (those based on roots and those on routes) intersect with each other in the “context of different experiences of migration and belonging” (Murji 2008:174). Hence, migrant identities are formed ‘on the road’, formed by movements across continents identifying with more than one place. As Murji argues further “[T]heir geographies of belonging do not operate on a national scale that limits and ties the idea of belonging to nation states. Instead, there is a quasi-hybrid, diasporic and transnational sense of belonging and identity.” (Murji 2008:176). Hence, any manner of essentialising identities is a simplistic way of forcing identities upon people to suit national political or policy needs. In a globalized world any such attempts are doomed to failure. For any coherent policy which claims to be inclusive and cognizant of the multicultural nature of modern states needs to move away from essentialised approaches to identities and embrace the fluid, hybrid nature of identities of global citizens. As Andreas Huyssen puts it, “Monolithic notions of identity, often shaped by defensiveness or victimology, clash with the conviction that identities, national or otherwise, are always heterogeneous and in need of such heterogeneity to remain viable politically and existentially” (Huyssen 1995: 5).

However, that precisely is not happening. Instead, the experience of doubt and uncertainty about individual and collective identities has been driving people to take shelter under the familiar, known and the secure boundaries of community or nation and consolidate them further. If the postmodern condition exhibits difference, diversity and fragmentation at every level of life (Mercer 1990), the anxiety produced by such an insecurity has been unleashing xenophobic, communitarian (communal) and racist politics everywhere (Balibar 2005). This situation is amply highlighted in the immigration discourses that are the staple of day today media obsessions and political roadshows in the West and elsewhere in the world.

Hence, in order to avoid the pitfalls resulting from essentialised identities, the anti-essentialist or “anti-foundational” (Du Gay et al 2000:2) approaches try to argue against the idea that an individual or a group has any “essential or core features as

unique property of a collective's members" because according to this view all identities are constructed in a process of interaction. This implies that identity is a "social artefact - an entity moulded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centres of power" (Cerulo 1997:386). This perspective further argues that the essentialist dichotomies that govern gender, ethnicity and national belonging are conceptualised as products of linguistic discourse and 'social performance' (Butler 1999). This does not mean that the individual is merely at the mercy of the social forces, rather, positively participates as an active agent in this process of negotiation and assumes diverse identity positions as a strategic interactional tool. Social agents such as family, community, places of work or social gatherings offer multiple identity positions and an individual negotiates with these offerings and assumes multiple identities acceptable to the self at various contexts (Balibar et al. 2007). This is assumed to be the normal way human beings interact socially and integrate with the larger community. However, very often it is the majority or dominant community that sets the terms and deploys discursive power to make the minorities fall in line. It is precisely in the arena of contention and cultural struggle where migrant identities take their shape.

#### IDENTITIES: A DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION

Migrant identities are a product of discursive negotiation and/or contestation between the prevalent discourses about immigration in the 'host' societies and the stories that they tell about themselves. And these discourses contain narratives, which themselves are mediated by memories. Basing his argument on Michel Foucault's research, Stuart Hall (1997) argues that discourse is not just restricted to language but it also involves social practice of producing meaning through language. Moreover, discourse creates its own object and directs and legitimates the ways in which issues are discussed, which in turn create the possibilities of restricting or directing issues from entering into the discursive sphere based on the dynamics of power. Subjects such as madness, punishment, sexuality, immigrant, the disabled etc. have meaningful existence because of certain discourses. These discourses are historical products and produce different subjects at different periods according to socio-historical contexts.

In this manner large sections of people could be excluded while a small minority may pursue its interests according to the power it can wield (Hall 1997).

All identities (individual and national) are products of discursive negotiation (Wodak 2009), and these negotiations take place through the use of language. In a democratic society such negotiation takes place in the 'public sphere' where language is employed primarily for communicative purposes aimed at 'producing understanding' (Habermas 1984). However, language can also be employed for 'strategic' uses where individuals and institutions try to achieve specific social and economic ends by the "colonization" of the 'life-world' by institutional discourse depending on the power (social, economic, political or symbolic) one has in his/her disposal. This especially is in deficit in the case of migrants as they have limited ability afforded by language to understand the cultural codes and participate in the discourses of the host society. And hence, they are continually subjected to hostile discourses. In the case of South Asian immigrants, the first generation definitely suffered from this limitation. The situation of women was even more poignant as they first came as wives, even less educated than men (Brah 1996).

Therefore, while discussing the issue of migrants it is often a question of their ability to participate in the discursive field that needs highlighting for it is a question of inclusion or exclusion that determines how migrants struggle to integrate into the new environment as Ruth Wodak argues:

[.....W]e need to approach the process of inclusion or exclusion by carefully considering issues of power, in defining access to discourses and power in discourses. The first case relates to institutional/structural inclusion/exclusion—who has access to which 'orders of discourse,' to which genres, contexts, and in which roles? The second dimension concerns situated interaction and the ways dominance is negotiated—through knowledge, institutional roles, language, gender, ethnicity, social class or a combination of all these factors." (Wodak 2011: 55)

Immigration discourse is a set of discourses set against the backdrop of nations, borders, security and national identity. Hence, it involves discourses about those who belong and those who do not. It is a discourse employed to set the agenda of exclusion/inclusion, or to legitimize the decisions or policies of the governments and the political elite, and quite often it is used as a power-tool while interacting with “Others”. Against the background of Romania and Bulgaria becoming full members of European Union in 2014 the immigration discourse about the Roma community taking place in the UK at the time typically exemplifies the nature and power of such discourse, which once took place about the South Asians who migrated to the UK in the 1950’s and the ‘60s seeking employment<sup>31</sup>.

Hence, if migrant identity is an outcome of discursive negotiation, the question that they are always faced with is: who frames the discourse? From whose point of view are these issues discussed? How do migrants enter such a discourse and to what purpose? Who formulates the terms of belonging and who defines the boundaries that affect belonging and non-belonging? Given the structural power dynamics that are at work within a nation-state frame, it is the ‘host society’ and its structural agents (media, politics, culture) that set the dominant agenda against which the migrants have to negotiate, either to assimilate or integrate, in whatever space allowed for their existence (Modood 2005a).

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31 Following on a comment by Former British Home Secretary David Blunket (David Blunket in riot warning over Roma migrants, BBC News, 12 November 2013), Garry Younge (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/17/slandering-roma-isnt-courageous-but-racist>) argues how it is racist because the present discourse about the issues of their nature of belonging to British society is not because of who they are but because they are poor. A similar discourse had prevailed about South Asians when they arrived in the 1950s and the ‘60s as poorly educated, lacking employment skills and hence ending up among the working class of British society, often forced to live in social housing and areas the economically affluent British population shunned. Their ways of living, dress, the smell of their food etc. were butt of ridicule and stereotype. It was primarily not because of who they were but because they were poor. But very recently when David Cameron visited India he invited Indian business people, students etc. to come and set up businesses in the UK and learn at UK universities. Hence, they are welcome despite being not ‘white’ and European, confirming the view that racism is not about skin anymore but about economics. The same history is repeating itself in the case of the historically most reviled, isolated Roma people today as they try to become part of European Union and hence could travel to the UK seeking employment.

If from the perspective of the migrant the process of negotiating belonging becomes an issue of one's identity, for the 'host' societies, it raises the anxious issues of how and where migrants belong, the socio-economic impacts of immigration and the redefinition of community (national) identity. The May 2014 elections for European Parliament (EU) exhibited such anxieties throughout Europe where those political formations that argued against further European integration, (which basically refers to free movement of peoples), won against the Pro-EU political formations by giving voice to the anxieties of 'host communities' against a background of economic hardship suffered due to the imposition of neoliberal economic policies, forced austerity and the continued economic downturn (Guardian 2014).

If migration of people within the EU itself causes such anxieties, migration from outside the EU accentuates these anxieties further raising the spectre of xenophobia in the form of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism (Balibar 1991). This issue, compounded by the discourses about issues relating to national security, war against terror and the ever increasing Jihadi threats to evolving multicultural Western societies further exacerbate these anxieties. From this point of view migrant belonging occupies a central place in immigration countries transforming the identities of both the migrants as well as the host communities. Here every encounter redefines and transforms collective and individual identities with possibilities of producing both positive and negative outcomes. The political and media discourses often try rigorously to divide populations into mutually exclusive ethno-national or cultural categories by deploying essentialist conceptions of community identities. Such approaches, not only "construct and maintain the exclusionary discourses directed towards migrants and other groups, they also fundamentally misunderstand the nature of social life by imposing overly strict delineations on groups" (Jones & Krzyzanowski 2011: 51).

If the case of the Romanian and Bulgarian migrants is typical of such stereotypical discourses in today's British context, the experience of Muslims is one of relentless

negative representations which are vehemently resented by Muslims due to its reductive character. The resentment is palpable in a young Muslim man's ethnographic interview for the Parekh Report on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain (2000) where he reacts:

I'm Muslim... and portrayed in the media, it's always negative, you never see anything positive; it's always fanatics. But Islam's not all about that and it sort of gives you low self-esteem, because beyond that there's a lot of positive. (Asian, male, Birmingham, 16-24 age group. Parekh 2000: 41)

To present a united front against such exclusionary and intimidating discourses by its powerful oppressor, the immigrants often deploy essentialist identities resorting to tighten their cultural bonds. Madan Sarup explains how it happens:

The group gains strength by emphasizing its collective identity. This inevitably means a conscious explicit decision on the part of some not to integrate with 'the dominant group', but to validate their own culture (their religion, language, values and ways of life). ..... Another feature of groups is that sometimes grievances are displaced; in some situations, for example, political interests can only be articulated in, say, religious terms because no other vehicle for expression is available. (Sarup 1996: 3)

Given the uncertainty and insecurity of life, migrants seek mutual support from one another and, in the process, soon end up forming identity based communities. This is evident in Hari P's experience. Despite having difficulty renting a house due to the attitude of the landlords towards migrants, Hari P and his family still managed to be successful entrepreneurs owning such varied businesses as corner shops and petrol pumps. Migrants such as Hari, having lost a home in Uganda to hostile political forces,



have to create a 'new' home which he managed to do by building a community of migrants of which he is proud as he describes in the following words:

Within a short time we developed a community centre and we started to get together for festivals we organised. We had a hall given to us by the local council in the Parade where we all get together every Sunday for prayer meetings and what not. And eventually we bought our own place in 1987. Two years ago we moved to a big place where we are now here.

This is what one finds in the UK and the West in general where, in order to organize themselves for political action against exclusion and discrimination, the minorities resort to religious or old national identities. It is because no other racially neutral identity positions are available to them (Modood and Werbner 1997). However, this precisely is what is held against migrants as those who do not want to integrate. As a reaction to such forced integration migrants' grievances get displaced as in the case of some young Muslims joining Jihadi groups.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH ASIAN IN THE UK

Given the complexity in migrations of their geographical contexts, the time of their diverse migrations and especially their facilitating factors, employing the common term migrant to every individual and group of migrants is misleading. Moreover, treating the issue in this way reduces the complex phenomenon of migration to the existing stereotypical discourses and nullifies the effectiveness of any policy that intends to address the issue (Jones & Krzyanowski 2011). The case of South Asian immigrants is quite illustrative of such a complexity and how lumping them all together under the category migrant fails to capture their unique relationship and contribution to British self-understanding (Ranasinha 2013a).

As already discussed, the term South Asian refers to people who migrated to the UK from the Indian subcontinent. This would mean from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan. Each of these countries has shared histories, but also histories that diverged as they became independent nations. In the case of India and Pakistan, this was also a relationship of antagonism followed by the Partition and wars that took place between these two nations. Those that migrated from these countries have their particular national identities as well as cultural and religious affinities and differences. There is also the issue of the class they belong to. The possibility of migration to the UK, Europe or America largely depends on people's economic status as already discussed rendering them either as entrepreneur-executive class or as economic refugees of globalization, meaning economic migrants. The chances of migration and the terms of settlement are very different in each category depending on their class. Even among the economic migrants one must take note of early migrants who arrived after the Partition of India. The circumstances of their migration and the skills and education level they brought along were vastly different from those who arrived in the 1970s from East Africa and again from those who arrived as highly educated and skilled workers from the 1990s onwards. Their specific circumstances and social capital have unique influence in the way they negotiate their belonging and attachment to the UK.

However, among all South Asians their colonial relationship with Britain along with its effects still dominates how they view Britain and how they can belong there. As Chris Weedon (2014: 8) argues:

For many people in Western Europe of South Asian descent, the legacies of colonialism and Partition remain important to narratives of history, a sense of roots and belonging, and to forms of diasporic living today. For some second and third generation Muslims, the global rise of Islamism since the 1990s speaks both to individual and collective feelings of oppression and has seemed to meet needs otherwise unmet in contemporary Britain.

Moreover, the relationship of these migrants to the UK has also been continually affected by the political, economic, military relationships between the original country of the migrants and the UK. And in the case of Muslims much has changed since 9/11 (The twin towers episode in America in 2001) and the war on terror affecting the lives and movements of almost every Muslim in the West (Abbas 2004).

In such a situation, “attempting to theorize such complexities in terms of an undifferentiated identity as migrants merely plays by stereotypes and fails to account for the ‘constructed nature and the dialectic constitution of groups’” It is because “as individuals we have huge ranges of affinities and attachments that shape the ways we perceive ourselves, and crucially, ourselves in relation to others (collective or otherwise)” (Jones & Krzyzanowski 2011: 43). In Erving Goffman’s (1959) sense the formation of self happens in the process of everyday interaction with others in various situations. And in the case of a migrant’s life, not all experiences are bad. They are a mixed bag of inclusion and exclusion where the responsibility lies with both sides: the migrant as well as the host community.

Hence, the relationship between belonging and identity can be viewed thus: “belonging can be considered a process whereby an individual in some way feels some sense of association with a group and, as such, represents a way to explain the relationship between a personalized identity and a collective one. In a purely conceptual way belonging is about the relationship between personal identity and a collective identity ....” (Jones & Krzyzanowski 2011: 44). Here it refers to a migrant’s personal identity and the collective national identity. Therefore, migrant identity is not something that exists prior to such interaction, but is a product of social action at a particular time of a migrant’s personal history and the way she negotiates her belonging to the country of arrival “constructed frequently through contradictory, dialectical processes” (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2011: 46). As for Stuart Hall, identity is “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and

culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (Hall 1990: 225). From this view, a migrant’s defining oneself exclusively from one’s roots (religious or geographical) will be as essentialist (ascribed-fixed), debilitating and exclusivist whereas a migrant’s defining oneself in contextually situated multiple points of view would be non-essentialist, inclusive and enabling (Murji 2008).

The above theoretical clarification is crucial for a discussion on migrant identities as it explains how individual or group identities emerge in the process of social negotiation. Hence, I argue that migrant identity is a strategic choice for socio-political purposes rather than an effort to form an exclusive individual or group identity based on essentialist attributes, though such discourses are the staple of current political climate all over the world where identities are deployed in their essentialist conceptions. In fact, the purpose of this discussion is to counter those approaches because such conceptions most often work towards reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices, furthering xenophobic political projects that are gaining strength day by day all over the world. Observing such identity deployments destroying the multicultural fabric of countries like India when Hindutva ideology came to dominate politics and the spread of *Wahabbism*<sup>32</sup> in the Islamic world producing ever more Jihadi outfits and various other forms of religious fundamentalism in the world, it is important to deconstruct all movements that resort to essentialist conceptions of identity (Benhabib 2002). Knowing their demagogic power in the history of humanity to produce conflicts, wars and genocides, it is essential to guard against such tendencies and defeat them with every possible effort (Appadurai 1998).

## STORIES FROM JOURNEYS: IDENTITY AS ROOTS

The unique background of South Asian immigrants shows that they belonged to various ethnic, religious, cultural, professional, national or transnational communities.

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<sup>32</sup> A stream of strict form of Islam being exported the world over through Saudi influence that believes in the literal interpretation of Koran and treats all other ways of Islamic interpretation and ways of living as un-Islamic.

Very often they define and distinguish themselves as coming from this or that place in India or Africa with a sense of having belonged there. When they begin life in the UK they are also defined and distinguished by others, referring to their roots as their collective identity (Parekh 2008: 9). Roots play a significant part in the construction of a migrant's identity as already noted above. This is because people's collective memory, particularly having belonged to a place, offers them a sense of identity. Wise would declare: "Identity is territory" (Wise 2000: 310) which exhibits essentialist characteristics (Murji 2008). Members of a collective have unique histories tied to places and cultures and are assumed to internalise some of the qualities typical of groups formed in such processes of interaction (Cerulo 1997). However, territory not only refers to a fixed location of one's roots but also refers to the territory one marks through journeys and arrivals, territorialised by repetitive marking and made familiar over time. This way of looking at home removes it from the realm of the mere nostalgic and broadens its scope and it applies to migrant reality very closely. Even though the first generation migrants lean more on their roots for describing their identity, as years go by those memories make place for new ones from the new routes and roots they come to construct. Here we see the strategic use of roots for identifying with those sharing the same conditions of life and struggles.

In my interviews I noticed views of mutating identity among some of the first generation migrants. According to general theoretical assumptions, by living in a new country over a period of time, people would be integrated more and more into the existing communities and their old national affiliations should lessen and fade away (Renshon 2008). Some of the first generation South Asians exemplifies this as does Suhel R who was born in Bangladesh in 1959 but arrived in the UK in 1991. His decision to be British seems practical but anecdotal as he says:

I'm British yeah. I'm Bangladeshi British. [...] Some people keep two passports but what's the point? I have my British passport.

This switch in affiliation is even more pronounced in the case of Hari P who was born in 1949 in Uganda and now feels an affinity with Britain and Wales because, having come as a refugee from Uganda in the 1972, everything that he and his family has is made possible by this country as he gratefully acknowledges and feels a sense of responsibility towards the country of his adoption:

I feel definitely British; that's all I know now. This country has given us a lot, and I feel it's our duty to look after the country, do the same here. Welsh? Yes; what we got ... the Welsh people have given us.

This mutation of a migrant's identity from roots to routes is more pronounced in the case of the second and third generation South Asians as exemplified by Darshini M who was born in London in 1991 and was living and studying at Cardiff University. Her grandparents arrived in the UK from Kenya and she, as a third generation South Asian immigrant, neither knows a home other than London nor can she speak her ancestor's Gujarati language. As already quoted in Chapter 4, being a third generation immigrant she has a clear idea about her being British. It is because she hardly knows India, having visited only twice in her life. All that she knows in life is British: her first language is English; she learnt British history at school and ready to defend Britain against unfair criticism of the country.

Her progressive affinity with the country, which her parents and grandparents found to be strange and alien when they arrived first, is because it is her only home. Being British is her identity and she would defend the country against undue criticism despite acknowledging its flaws. How she defines herself British is narrated by her in a practical way:

I feel British in the sense that if someone said 'Britain is not great' I'll defend it, which is strange. I can understand the flaws in this country.

However, if someone tried to put down Britain I would defend it. That makes you British. Defending your country.

However, in today's circumstances where people can have multiple citizenships and the possibility of forming transnational communities, the migrant assimilation or integration theory in the old sense does not apply anymore, a situation further complicated by globalization (Castles 2002). Ratna H's statements make this point quite clear. Ratna H is a 68 year old Gujarati immigrant who belongs to a village in Kutch (in Gujarat, India) but had migrated to Kenya as a child. He further migrated to the UK as a young man in 1966 and has been living here ever since, and yet considers himself still an Indian despite living in Britain for nearly fifty years. He says:

I'll always be Indian. To me British Indian isn't relevant. If you're born in India you'll always be Indian. It's your motherland. I don't think I'd call myself British. Kids may, but I consider myself as an Indian.

Ratna had migrated to Cardiff in 1966, worked for British Rail and retired as a manager and continues to live in Cardiff. However, he sees himself as an Indian. This kind of belonging is typical of the transnational condition facilitated by modern means of communication as Castles argues (Castles 2002). However, such a conception of his identity has not restricted Ratna from having a favourable opinion about the Welsh people and Wales which he expresses as follows:

People are friendly. My view is, you have to reciprocate - you just can't be an individual on your own, you have to be friendly to neighbours, talk to them, give them your background, and then they will accept you [...] if you tell them what you are and they'll respect you. Even if you say hello - that goes a long way, [...] if you're quiet and don't talk to people then they'll probably treat you as a stranger.

The interplay between identity conceptions and the view of the place and people where one lives need not contradict each other. These could be explained in terms of their human courtesy dynamics or instrumentalist view of life. However, a serious mismatch between the two could potentially lead a person to have exclusionary attitudes towards those who do not belong to one's group. This lack of empathy towards people of one's own country of living, caused by segregation and exclusion as migrants is clearly evident among the Jihadis who joined the Islamic State in the Middle East. There are examples of Muslim Jihadis from the Western countries and Australia who joined ISIS (Islamic State) in Iraq and Syria and are instrumental in encouraging Jihad against Westerners and beheading some of them. One such person is identified as an Australian immigrant of Lebanese origin Mohammad Ali Baryalei who, from the territory of the ISIS where he is a military commander, called upon fellow Muslims in Australia to conduct public beheadings of ordinary non-Muslim citizens. Explaining why some Muslim youngsters choose to be drawn into such extremism Dr Jamal Rifi, a community leader, says that "a feeling of isolation from the rest of Australia pervades many Muslim neighbourhoods despite their economic successes"<sup>33</sup>.

Feelings of confusion about how to view the land of arrival and the people living there are predominant among the first generation immigrants in the early stage of their arrival as their memories amply show. The predominance of their memories of home left behind play an important role here.

### MEMORIES OF HOME: MIGRATION, AN UNHAPPY CHOICE

Madan Sarup defines a migrant as: "[A] person who has crossed the border. S/he seeks a place to make 'a new beginning', to start again, and to make a better life. The newly arrived have to learn the new language and culture. They have to cope not only with the pain of separation but often also with the resentments of a hostile population"

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<sup>33</sup> The above quote of Dr Jamal Rifi was taken from the article by Jane Perlez, The New York Times republished in <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/islamic-state-lieutenant-emerges-from-australian-red-light-district-598615?from=home-topstories> accessed on 27/09/2014



(Sarup 1996: 1). In these circumstances they are searching for a new belonging but haven't managed yet. Home for them is where one belongs and finds stability. Home is where one has enormous emotional investment. Thus "the concept of home seems to be tied in some way to the notion of identity" and, in the early stage of migration, it always points back to where one came from (Sarup 1996: 2). Hence, an individual's initial narratives about identity are very often tied to the notion of 'back home'. That is because identities cannot be free-floating. They are determined by spaces, boundaries and borders (Halbwachs 1992). For the first generation migrants the place of their roots dominates their understanding of identity. Therefore the question "where do you come from?" is always asked about the migrants and the answer obviously leads to where they belonged or their ancestors belonged. Woodward tries to explain the role of roots in shaping one's identity:

Starting points and sources are linked to the idea of 'home' as the place where it all began. Home means different things. Home may connote security and safety or for many people it may be a place of risk, danger and violence. Even if migration has taken place because of 'push factors', which force people to leave their homes the place that they have left retains symbolic importance in the construction of identity. At the most extreme, the compulsion which people experience to leave their home is due to threats of violence. However, the place left retains importance in shaping collective and individual identities (Woodward 2003 : 48).

My interview data suggests that, at this early stage of their moving away from the familiar home to unfamiliar and often hostile new country, the migrants are likely to be dominated by the memories of home, often a nostalgic remembrance of everything perfect and peaceful, as in the case of 47 year old Vilas P who came to Britain in 1987 after she got married but found it difficult to appreciate the quiet of Canton when compared with the hustle and bustle of India. She narrates her queer experience:

My sister-in-law lived in Canton. That place, it looked so quiet, the roads were quiet and as soon as I got down from the car my first thought was 'is there any riots going on'? I couldn't see anybody on the street, doors were closed [...] and everything was so quiet."

Here, the contrast is between the busy Indian streets and the relative calm of Cardiff streets. Despite the highly populated streets of India being stressful to navigate for any newcomer, Vilas finds them normal where the quiet is associated with empty streets only in times of communal riots and police curfew. Equating the quiet of Canton as foreign as a riot and curfew appears quite weird and ironic though it only highlights the 'unfamiliarity and the foreignness of the quiet' that makes one frightened of a life without sociability afforded in one's homeland as she further notes:

I thought 'oh my god this is going to be so hard,' because when you come from India it's so exciting, so many people on the roads. It was a big compromise for me, coming to this sort of place.

The fear of loneliness haunts every migrant and instantly they look for those from a similar background. While dissecting South Asian migrants' memories one can notice their sense of loss, anxiety of loneliness, loss of community and the home left behind as constant motifs which contribute to the complexity of their experience and impacts on the consequent emergence of new identities. This is manifest in most of the memory narratives of the migrants, be they post-Partition inter-border migrants between India and Pakistan or post-Partition economic migrants to the UK from the subcontinent, or those who arrived from East Africa. This motif of home points to a general phenomenon in the migrants' experience where home has a special place in the history of journeys whether their leaving is voluntary or forced upon by circumstances as Woodward has noted.

Home, understood as a spatial or territorial location and as a private domain where one finds peace and rest, is a point of arrival in the process of a journey. And therefore, “the longing to return always shapes the present and the ways in which people negotiate their identities in relation to what they might become, as well as what they are” (Woodward 2002: 49). That is why we often hear stories, especially, from the first generation migrants about returning home one day, a theme well theorised in migration literature (Castles 2006). Woodward (2003) suggests that as long as they maintain an option to return, they also get fixated with their identities based on roots, something that complicates the process of their belonging into host communities or the nation. This is evident in Vilas P’s narrative where she talks about her shock as she arrived into Britain and her nostalgia for home in India and how she still tries to find ways to return:

How am I going to spend my life here? Big compromise for me, coming to this sort of place. Still I’m not settled here.

I keep on telling my children. I told husband that let’s move back to India; there are nice schools where they can study - when my son was born. But my mother-in-law didn’t allow us. I said ok at least let me put my son there. With that I’ll have an excuse to go see him and have a reason to go back to India. She said no you’ve only got one son how can you put him in boarding school?

Very often, how one views one’s migration depends also on the reason why one migrated, how free the choice was, what motivated the decision, and what hopes and dreams it offered. It depends also on the kind of life one enjoyed prior to their migration. For those, especially women, who arrived as wives this was not a great choice. This disrupted their world in a big way as one can notice from Vilas P’s experiences. It is because, contrary to discourses about poor immigrants coming to the West to escape poverty back home, often they had left behind better living situations

and conditions with domestic employees to do the household chores and family support to look after the growing children. Vilas P's narrative illustrates this better as she still finds it difficult here:

I tell you, still I don't like it here [UK] – if my husband gave me a chance to go back I would go back straight within a second without taking anything. Still I'm not settled here.

In India we always had servants; we had been so pampered and spoilt. But my mum she taught us everything, at a very early age you start learning to cook so I used to know most of the cooking. It was only the cleaning part and that we used to have servants to do. So when I was in this country I used to find it initially very hard doing everything yourself.

Such experiences contradict most migration narratives that lump all immigrants together as economic migrants shunting them into British or Western working class category. This outlook can hardly grasp the caste based social hierarchy of South Asia which is further differentiated on the basis of their being economically identified as petty traders or entrepreneur farmers whose status consciousness is different from that of the British or Western working classes. That is the reason why Jones & Krzyanowski (2011) are wary of using the term migrant to lump together all migrants as a single category. The need to consider migrant experiences in their uniqueness makes much sense when one notices the socio-economic background from where migrants come, their diverse experiences of migration and how such diversity impinges on migrants' view of their world and the world they enter into. This also explains why some immigrants find it easy to integrate than others.

Another interviewee, Dr. Uzair's experience of moving to Pakistan after the Partition of India and the role that the memories of his home in India play in his self-understanding are typical of home as a space of nostalgia. He finds it difficult to move away from the memories of his original pre-Partition home in Mainpuri, Uttar

Pradesh, in India, in spite of having first migrated to Pakistan and later to Britain. He finds it difficult even to be a Pakistani after so many years of being a Pakistani citizen before moving to Britain:

My memory of that period is ..... when we were moving that day, we were leaving Mainpuri. Obviously you know our culture. Everyone thinks oh, this eight year old, he's too little. No one thinks he'll have any understanding or any emotions what they are going through and I will never, ever forget that in my life. They were talking and I knew that we are leaving this place.

As Woodward (2003) argues, home is a place where one imagines being at peace. Home is a space that one fills with imaginations of everything that happened to oneself and where one did things that leave a permanent mark on one's identity wherever the life's journeys happen. A deep sense of permanent loss is palpable in most of the migrant narratives as exemplified by Dr Uzair:

And I was looking in my house—it was a huge house with a big garden, you know, sand in the garden, and I used to ride my little bike in it, a three wheeler, and my room. And I had painted something in the school, it was on the wall. My parents: 'Ah, my son, look what he's made.' And absolute quiet and silence and I'm saying, 'My God, I'll never see this place again.' It wasn't just a sad feeling. This is my house, this is my room, this is my painting, this is my garden and the tree and this and that—I'll never see it again.' And the worst part was I couldn't share it with anyone.

The role played by the experience of spatial occupation and images that can create in the collective memory is already discussed. There Halbwachs notes: "The place a

group occupies is not like a blackboard, where one may write and erase figures at will ..... But place and group have each received the imprint of the other. Therefore every phase of the group can be translated into spatial terms, and its residence is but the juncture of all these terms. Each aspect, each detail, of this place has a meaning intelligent only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it" (Halbwachs 1980: 3).

Halbwachs' view is further corroborated by McGregor Wise (2000) who argues that every environment inhabited by individuals reflects a group culture exhibiting a unique identity. People who inhabit a particular space see the inhabited space mutually impact and transform each other because through our repetitive actions we structure a space and mark a milieu. It is because space and identity are so affectively interlinked that for some, depending upon the causes of their migration, memories of home linger far too long, even debilitating their process of integration. If for some it is an agonising experience, for others it is a challenge and an opportunity. In the case of South Asians their roots that unite them transcend the divisions (of nationality, religion, caste, language) that dominate their relationship with one another. Hence, their roots are a sign of their rootedness in a culture from whose strength they cope with their migrant reality by networking with one another. Such networks are not only of territorial belonging but also cultural and religious - a South Asian hallmark.

### RELIGION: AN EVER PRESENT IDENTITY

One of the features of South Asian identity in the UK is premised upon peoples' belonging to their religion, whether Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism or Christianity. From my own experience I can see that even those who arrived in the UK very recently from India as professional employees, being Christian by religion, identify themselves as Catholics and try to be associated with a Church community. This is all the more true of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs for whom the only identities available as they came here were religious and ethnic (Modood et al. 1997). This is also expressed by most

who participated in this project. This is much more pronounced in the case of Muslims than others. However, in spite of the dominance of religion in their lives, the tendency to conceive their identities as multiple or hybrid is evident in most narratives. A typical example is Dr Mohammed H from Ebbw Vale who arrived in the UK in the 1970's and worked as a General Practitioner for National Health Service (NHS). He would articulate his identity thus:

I am a Muslim, I am an Indian, but I live in the UK having a British Passport. So I am a British Indian Muslim.

This aspect of multiple and overlapping identities is well illustrated by Channi K from Caerphilly, Wales, who arrived here in 1961 and lived over 50 years in Wales playing for the Welsh Hockey team. He has no problems seeing himself as a Welsh Sikh of African birth as he says:

Well, I've spent more years in Wales than in India...well, in India I hardly spent any time or even Tanzania. Tanzania I was eighteen years old when I left so I've got fifty years, fifty-one years in Wales now. So, I would call myself a Welsh-Sikh, born in Tanzania, born in Dar-e-Salaam. But because I've spent fifty-one years of my life here I would call myself a Welsh Sikh.

From the point of their roots, three predominant identities are a hallmark of most South Asians wherever they go: religion, caste and language. All these identities dominate with immense potential to create violent clashes among groups time and again. Among the three, religion has caused thousands of communal riots between various religious groups in the history of South Asia, often leaving the minorities at the receiving end, finally causing the Partition of 1947. As already discussed before, Partition violence was the most cruel that the South Asians experienced leaving over two million dead, over 12 million displaced and over 50,000 women abducted and

raped. Ever since the South Asian identities are dominated by the religions they belong to the reign of their religious identities has been continually growing in the aftermath of every communal riot and the experience of violence. These identity boundaries are continually reinforced by the continued deployment of identity politics by all the political formations in South Asia. These communitarian boundaries continue to divide South Asians even when they migrate though, due to their migrant circumstances, they have been able to transcend the traumatic experiences and identify with one another on the basis of their South Asia roots. However, one can notice their evolving character and strategic use in finding a political space. It is here we notice the generational difference as in the case of Darshini.

### ROOTS FOR ROOTEDNESS AND BELONGING

The relation to past places, spaces, boundaries and borders is quite different in the case of second generation immigrants, particularly if they are born and brought up in Britain. My interview data and other research suggest that, for the most part of their life, while growing up, they are not very conscious of the historical dimensions of their identities. Their initiation to identity consciousness takes place as they step into school and as they become aware of how others view them. Very often school is the first multicultural, multi-ethnic context in which many become aware of the history of their community that has shaped their collective identity. Here the search for one's roots is especially undertaken to ascertain one's rootedness rather than to go back in time to fix one's identity. As one of the interviewee, Nayur Z, puts it:

I had a friend...by the time I got to high school, she was Indian – she was Hindu. I was Pakistani Muslim and the only difference there was that she was Hindu and I was Muslim. So again, didn't really know the difference, especially with Bangladeshis, it was just that they were Bangladeshi. But we didn't have multimedia as we do today back then. We didn't have the internet and we didn't have so many TV channels which show so many programmes for us to be aware of these



things. So I was quite ignorant to what had happened in the past until, I would say my very late teens, early twenties.

Nayur's experience of meeting another person of Asian background in school causes her to reflect on her own personal and collective history. She clearly acknowledges her unmediated encounter with a Hindu girl. She specifically acknowledges having no TV or internet and hence the encounter produces a pure, "I was Pakistani Muslim and the only difference there was that she was Hindu and I was Muslim. So again, didn't really know the difference, especially with Bangladeshis, it was just that they were Bangladeshi". No mediated images of a Hindu, Pakistani, Muslim or Bangladeshi making connection and interaction non-prejudiced by the media constructions of groups.

Nayur is a British born Pakistani, (aged 35 years now) and she narrates her experience of coming to know her roots through her interaction with another young South Asian girl at school. Until this encounter she was not conscious of her identity as a South Asian sharing the unique history of a partitioned nation. Accidentally coming to a few glimpses of her people's history, she now feels the need to understand herself and her identity. In Nayur's case her search for an identity begins with her first contact with someone who speaks her language, who talks about having links back in the Indian subcontinent. This illustrates the earlier theoretical discussion which argued that identities emerge in a social context through day to day social interactions. Nayur also stresses the role media plays in constructing one's identity to the extent it informs things that otherwise one would have obtained from other contexts such as schools.

Here is how she talks about her effort to discover one's roots as a process of constructing her identity:

Actually, when I went to university, it was the first time I made friends with a Sikh girl. Where I was growing up in Cardiff there was

a very small Sikh community. I mean, when I grew up I knew nobody. My parents' doctor was Sikh, Dr Singh, and he was just...because he spoke their language they always stayed with Dr Singh. But we didn't know anybody of that community. I came to university and she was my best friend, and we just started talking and talking about our countries, our backgrounds, and we'd go to each-others' houses and I realised well, we're exactly the same. Her parents would speak pretty much the same language as we do. The culture was the same and I'd been to one or two weddings and I realised that actually, very much similar so what is the difference here?

And I made...actually I had another friend, a Pakistani friend, who told me that her background was the same as the Sikh girl's background that her parents were from the same village as the Sikh girl's parents. And that's why I started to look into things.

If Nayur were to view the Sikh girl, who became her friend, from the mediatized images of Partition violence which took place predominantly between Sikhs and Muslims, one could wonder how she would have related to the Sikh girl. However, in her case devoid of the media constructed images of Sikhs as Muslim killers at Partition, the need to understand one's roots dominated the interaction. It was necessitated by a process of growing up and adopting a distant view of one's family and community. At this stage hitherto taken for granted community-dominated identity gives way towards embracing a wider identity that connects individuals with similar roots.

Generally speaking, South Asian identities are always dominated by their religious or communal belonging, a point discussed before. These boundaries are strong and they are assuming further importance because of the dominance of religious or caste fundamentalism holding sway over people (Kundnani 2002). However, in a migrant's situation where all the immigrant communities are minorities and placed on the same socio-economic situation, interestingly, religion does not operate as a marker of

separate identities; instead, language and culture dominate as the markers of a shared identity. Hence, the legitimate question: How come that we have the same culture and language belonging to different religions? Such questions motivated Nayur to dig deeper into her roots, i.e. the place from where they all came.

This self-search on the part of Nayur goes contrary to Jones & Krzyanowski's (2011) argument that migrant identity as an issue related to belonging is based on their roots (prior to migration). In reality, roots in the narrow sense seem irrelevant to migration consciousness. However, for a migrant of the second and successive generations, along with negotiating their belonging, the search for roots also becomes a continuous negotiation as Darshini wishes to do:

Would like to have both identities (British and Indian), equally. I like being British but want to retain my Indian part. But it is difficult when you live here all the time. I can't understand Hindi and so don't watch a lot of Hindi movies either anymore. Feel like I am losing a bit.

As in this example, people very often have recourse to their roots in order to understand themselves better or situate themselves in a world suffused with multiple identities. Internally South Asians are not different from the phenomenon of multiple identities. Within the larger identity as South Asians they have national, religious, linguistic, professional and other identities that they are attached to from the perspective of their roots. However, in the UK their South Asian identity is a strategic choice as against the exclusionary or racist discourses prevalent in the UK as narrated by another interviewee, Wahida K who sees a transformation in her parents' perception of other South Asians (particularly between Pakistanis and Indians) because they had to deal with bigger common enemies such as racism and exclusion. In this process the internal divisions are either papered over or never allowed to surface, that is, the shameful conflicts among South Asians in the past. As she narrates in her interview how people ignored some aspects of their painful past and tried to assume a common South Asian identity:

People felt ashamed, embarrassed to talk about (Partition and violence and war that people had witnessed). They were embarrassed because I suppose the embarrassment is because it was infighting amongst your own. And they spent so much time only in one country seeing only one enemy that when they came to the UK they realised how much everybody else hates them, how much racism they must face, how horrific racism can be and how violent and how it can harm in so many ways. The hatred was overwhelming and I think people felt embarrassed (you know). They were also living next door to people who were Indian or Pakistani, so Pakistani person lived next door to an Indian person. So you don't want to bring up for they are your friends, you don't want to bring up the bad things and remember the Partition when that happened...

But here you experienced the same difficulty of facing racism, getting a job, send your children to school, trying to keep your family safe, have a roof over your head. So those were their priorities. And people forgot the past for they were so deeply entrenched in struggle to stay alive.

This is an interesting observation on how South Asians, faced with common problems, learn to live as one people with common roots. Their religious identities became subservient to their being from South Asian roots. Their existential concerns triumph over past rivalries or divisions.

Such strategic deployment of identity is further evident in other circumstances where the South Asians would assume the identity as Black for political purposes (Brah 1996). This in no way means that such going back is the only way of understanding oneself. In the process of living one assumes multiple identities that emerge from social negotiation (Sen 2007).

However, one should note that identities insistently rooted in one's origin such as home or homeland can lead to essentialist embrace of identities hindering migrant integration and even leading to fundamentalist and dangerous pathways of racism, exclusion and even conflict. For this reason Strath argues that the concept of homeland is inadequate and problematic when deployed today as a locus of belonging and identity. It is a value-laden and contested concept with poetic and imaginative force. The experiences of Nazi Germany, present day Hindutva, fast spreading Islamic Wahhabi ideology and all kinds of fundamentalist discourses are typical examples of how such conceptions have the potential to institutionalize racism, exclusion and communal violence (Strath 2008). Such possible social outcomes are detrimental to a multicultural society and we should be wary of any sort of identity politics that sticks rigidly to what can be called roots: cultural, territorial or racial. However, in the case of migrants, their roots do matter, especially as a strategic starting point for cultural or political organization. In the case of first generation migrants who arrived in Britain without families it was the affinity with their South Asian roots that sustained their continued existence and community formation (Brah 1996). Such connections based on roots and the networks of support established their migration from a mere struggle to a challenge with hopes of a better life as Hari P's experience proves.

## MIGRATION AS CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Hari P's parents had migrated from India to Uganda as economic migrants. He was born in Uganda in 1949, lost his father at the age of three. After being forced out of Uganda due to Idi Amin's anti-Asian policies he arrived in the UK in 1972 virtually as a refugee. Arriving in Britain what he became aware of first was the cold weather which he found very challenging. So much so, that for that one moment he thought that being in Uganda would have been better than the cold weather, as he narrates:

Just stepping out of the plane coming here we thought 'well we'd have been better dead in Uganda than coming here,' that was the feeling initially; so cold, weighed down with jackets.

It was our first time flying a long journey; dangerous in Uganda getting A to B but we were excited for journey.

“There was trouble at borders, so many checks; British passport made migration easy but in Uganda we were made to be seen as foreigners and Police challenged us.

In spite of all problems faced in Uganda and on travel, none deterred him from taking his migration as a challenge. In contrast to Vilas P’s perception discussed earlier, Hari P saw his forced migration as a great opportunity to move on in life. This difference in perception could have something to do with the role of gender among South Asians. While males, having more control over their lives see migration as an opportunity, females, often being dependent on males and having very few chances of socialisation in the early stages of their migration, don’t see it as an opportunity. Hence, the memories of “home also contribute(s) to the desire to stabilize identity” (Woodward 2003: 49) which is rendered insecure and decentred by moving away from home. Because there is no more home where there was once, like Hari P’s in Uganda, only the future matters. They looked for opportunities to settle quickly and move on. In this process of moving on dreams give way to the reality of settling in.

Ratna H’s experience is quite illustrative of the gap between dreams and reality, and how quickly one needs to adapt to the circumstances and venture into whatever is available to stabilise life and identity. When he came to the UK, he had intended to continue with his higher education. However, for lack of money he had to take up whatever job was available. He joined British Rail and worked there until he retired. (This part is already mentioned in Chapter 4).

In the process of negotiating their belonging questions about feelings of belonging, the agents who can determine the terms of belonging and how one negotiates with such demands are issues that are highly contingent and diverse, and therefore, very difficult to grasp analytically. But one thing is clear. Belongings do not develop in any

systematic or linear way. It differs from individual to individual and group to group. This process of attachment is complex, messy and sometimes it is even contradictory as to how an individual negotiates her way into membership of a group. This process of negotiation is based on social action and, therefore, the resultant identity perceptions are fluid. "External definitions and elective attachments both play a part in the construction of a belonging," as Jones & Krzyzanowski observe (2011: 47). The interaction between the expectations of the host community and the way migrants deal with them determine how they will belong. In this the early experiences determine a lot of what happens eventually. The following section will try to analyse how early experiences matter.

#### EARLY EXPERIENCES DETERMINE LATER HAPPENINGS

Quite often, the very first contacts and the experiences of acceptance or rejection by migrants can form lasting effects about the perception of the host community. In the research data, experiences of Maya P (50 years), who was born in Kampala, Uganda, educated in India until she was 19 and migrated to the UK in 1981, are a very useful. Maya moved to Cardiff in 1984 where her father owned a convenience store and she worked in that shop for the next 25 years. Her remembered experiences of being one of the very few Indian families in Cardiff at the time have led to very positive statements about the older generation among the Welsh people. She says:

[She] .... never had any bad experience. Those days were better than now. The new generation gives more trouble, particularly in the shop. All older people are very kind people... helping, quite friendly...

She further narrates her experience working in the family shop without having the facility of being a native English speaker and having difficulties understanding people's speech and yet finding Welsh people very patient:

If somebody asked something and I don't understand they don't get frustrated; they chat with you.

She particularly narrates her experiences of having been given a lift by her customers when she or her brother was found waiting for a bus. She recalls a very special event when she was alone with her children in November 2012 when they had a flood alert and how about 20 of her neighbours came to help move stock to a safe place and protect the area with sandbags. She says "[T]hey literally helped me move stock .... It's really nice isn't it?"

These positive experiences have remained with Maya always and therefore she says, she has 'lots of Welsh friends.' These experiences have played an important role in constructing her identity in Cardiff. So is the case with Vimla P.

Vimla P (born in 1952 in Kampala, Uganda, migrated to the UK in 1972) recalls her experience as she arrived in the UK being very positive too, though the cold climate, the culture shock of women smoking and binge drinking among some people also form part of her narrative about the early experiences of her coming to the UK. Despite these shocks her other remembered experiences are very positive. Despite having come as refugees from Idi Amin's Uganda, they were 'welcomed warmly' and offered shelter in a resettlement camp. She says: "We didn't like the weather, we didn't like the food, but people were very friendly."

Moving to Cardiff after her first baby was born she started looking for a job. She got a job in a store where she was the only Asian and was surprised because she had thought that "these jobs are only for the white people." After her higher education she got a job in the Department of Trade and Industry where, again, she was the only Asian. Narrating very positive experiences of working in a new environment she says she "did not experience any discrimination or ... didn't realise it". Her perception about jobs being for only white people speaks a lot about the low expectations early migrants had about what can be expected as migrants.



Sudha V, who was born in Tanzania in the year 1942, went to school in Dar-e-Salaam, did her undergraduate study in India, got married in 1969, went to Uganda with her husband and migrated to the UK in 1972 after Idi Amin expelled Asians. She was pregnant with her son when she migrated to Cardiff and was made to feel welcome by a Scottish Family who lived in Wales. The head of the family was a doctor (medical consultant). Her experiences of this family's support remains even today the prism through which she views her relationship with the British. She says:

They were very very kind. They announced in the Church that they were helping our family from Uganda and if anyone has anything to help can do so. .... I was expecting my son. People came with bags full of stuff for us: clothes, fairly new clothes. For the first year of my son's life I never bought him anything. Even baby nappies were given by people, and I couldn't afford to be proud. But people were very very kind, very generous. .... I am still in touch with that family. I can never ever forget someone who helped me so much in my life. Their names are: Dr Harper and Elaine.

These were the early experiences that shaped the terms of her and her family's belonging to the community where they settled. However, this was not the case with all the immigrants from South Asia. Other oral narratives suggest that people had to undergo considerable amount of difficulties in the very process of migration and settlement.

The experience of Wahida's family illustrates this struggle. Her family, being of Pakistani Muslim background, trying to live in a predominantly white middle class British neighbourhood in Birmingham, had to undergo considerable problems. While the whole family was bullied by an Irish neighbour pestering for money which they

never returned; her brothers had to leave school for being Asian and, hence, suffering racism and poor support at school as she explains:

There was an Irish family down the road who clearly experienced a lot of racism themselves. When they saw us move into the area of the road they saw that as a.... well we were at the lowest level and they were above us. So they became oppressors of some sort. Absolutely, yes. So they decided to harass us a lot. My brothers were harassed...

This is a queer experience of sorts. By being colonised by the English, the Irish have suffered similar treatment as Indians did. However, the grasp of racist attitudes over people is such that even the oppressed white people feel superior over coloured people. This attitude seems to have been displayed by the Irish neighbours. Speaking of how they were harassed in school, she says:

We experienced a lot of hostility, name calling and so on in school from other people. We were the only South Asian family at that part in high school. (Referring to her brothers) They also experienced things like..... The teachers also had issues. I... I know that they would... you know.... Impose stereotypes and expectations. People would casually insist quite a bit...

It affected them in that they were excluded from groups, excluded from friendships. They were not given any opportunities in help and support in their education and they were made to feel so unwelcome they couldn't wait to leave school. And the school was quite happy to get rid of them at the first opportunity. So they did form alliances with other people in school from the lower socio-economic groups, just the socially excluded and isolated.

Due to racism and exclusion that they suffered at school Wahida's brothers did not continue with their education and left school early. Their forming alliance with others from the lower economic groups is a typical way migrants deal with exclusion and racism. They seek support and succour from their own and here their roots matter.

In the case of the first generation South Asians their particular circumstances, more specifically, the questions of class and education posed serious barriers to their belonging to the local community. As most of the first generation migrants were poorly educated, unskilled workers, their social standing was determined by the nature of work they did or were able to do. Lacking language and cultural skills specific to the British way of life of the time their interaction was limited to their own groups. Their religious and cultural identities often clashed with British working class ways. Such a situation is illustrative of how group belonging is complicated by social, economic and cultural factors (Brah 1996).

Groups create thresholds and barriers and individuals construct and reconstruct their sense of belonging in this process. Often such belonging is sealed by forms of official recognition such as citizenship ceremonies, passports etc. However, it is not always essential that one's belonging is officially recognized by the group (e.g. naturalisation ceremony, passport etc.) though such external constraints certainly affect one's self-definition. However, "[A]t some level belonging needs to be supplemented and recognized by the others, those who already belong to the group to which one aspires; denial of recognition can lead to exclusions and discrimination" (Brah 1996: 47).

This, again, is well illustrated by the life experiences of Wahida K's family. Her early memories of living with her mother and siblings as the only South Asian (Pakistani Muslim) family, in a predominantly white suburb of Birmingham, is fraught with issues of belonging which were determined by the varying fortunes of her family. The family faced considerable amount of bullying from the next door neighbours who happened to be Irish immigrants and her brothers faced bullying in school from other students and teachers alike.

However, things changed for the better for the family when her mother started working as a receptionist in the local General Medical Practitioner's surgery. Her status as a traffic controller in a prestigious as well as socially important institution within the community was able to make a huge difference in the way the community perceived and dealt with the family and how this experience affected her and her family's view of their white neighbours as she explains:

... [I]n general I mean you had good and bad experiences. There are as many bad experiences as there were good. I have to say the best experience was when my mum got a job in doctor's surgery as a receptionist. The whole community got to know us, my mum. And then we became a massive part of the community. Then everybody would say "Hello" and on Christmas and Easter, times like that they would drop off boxes of chocolates. Also, because we lived near Cadbury World and many of the patients worked in the Cadbury World.

A job provides a role in society and a context where people come to know each other. When people interact more and more, old frames give way to viewing people differently, more concretely in a variety of situations. Such contexts are multicultural spaces where a sense of belonging, acceptance or rejection is experienced affecting one's identity.

Wahida's recollected memories and experiences make another significant point that allows one to see a difference in fortunes between males and females of her ethnic background when it comes to their chances of finding employment. Of the four siblings her two brothers did not continue education beyond Secondary level. Whereas the two sisters continued their education beyond graduate levels and went on to do postgraduate research and also find better jobs, their brothers were deprived

of chances in furthering their careers. Wahida's own positive experiences also gave her the freedom and courage to go beyond her own community to seek her prospective life partner from among the white Welsh community where she feels a sense of belonging along with her two children born out of this marriage. Having lived on the borderlines of both the cultures Wahida is able to form a view from a distance regarding racism which is prevalent in every community in some manner. Hence, in her view, racism is not merely an issue with the White British population, but the South Asian, Black and other ethnic minorities too equally exhibit their 'racism' (call it ethnicity!) in relation to those who do not belong to their community. As she explains:

I found that there was ... because people experience racism they felt they could be racist against British people. So quite often I've been in environment where there would be lots of South Asian people or African-Caribbean people and they would make statements about White people and I felt very uncomfortable about that and I say like you know we're fighting for equality, we're fighting for, you know, anti-racism and be perpetrators of it and it's hypocritical. And also I used to feel uncomfortable when saying things like half my family is White. So I would prefer you not to ... Actually even if I wasn't South Asian I wouldn't condone racism. So it's not about who we are. It's about what's right and what's wrong and this is wrong and I feel really uncomfortable.

A mixed race relationship makes one responsible both ways and allows a distance from both communities to view critically their attitudes towards one another. Hybrid identities offer such critical distance.

The other factors that complicate the issue of migrant belonging and identity stem from the mediation of institutions and the agents who act on behalf of institutions. In

this context institutions refer to various bodies of the state such as the police, the legislative and executive bodies of the government, non-governmental institutions, private sector organizations and many more. The agents of these institutions refer to various functionaries there. Most of these institutions had their origin at a different time period when migration as it is today was not the context of their emergence. Such archaic institutions tend to reproduce a different ethno-cultural idea of nations and act as gatekeepers when the migrants from different ethno-cultural backgrounds try to integrate into other cultural or national communities. Here, the role of institutions and their functionaries really matters in the life-chances made available for migrants. Wahida's memories of her mother's employment and her own experiences at school, when she was brought back from Pakistan and put in a school system, completely alien to her previous school system, illustrate this point. Wahida's family suffered discrimination and social exclusion when they had moved into an exclusively White area. But while living in the same area when her mother worked as a receptionist at the local doctor's surgery the family's exclusion from the local community diminished. Wahida's own experience at the school where she got very good help from teachers went a long way in her own positive identity construction whereas her brothers had the opposite experience and, as a result, they dropped out of school and had to end up working for factories, which got closed eventually rendering them jobless. The experiences of Vimla P, described here, corroborate this point further. Focusing on the structural aspects of discrimination becomes very important in the discussion about the emergence of migrant identities (Burns 2011). This is where migrants come to assume multiple identities and deploy them strategically for building networks that help them fight discrimination. Based on the interview data the following section will discuss how this happens.

## NEGOTIATING SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

If migrant identity is an outcome of social negotiation, how it takes place in day to day circumstances is a major issue. This is where experiences of most of the migrants come out poignantly. Migrant experiences of integration are stories of exclusion and inclusion, lack of opportunities and multiple opportunities, racism and struggle

against it as discussed. In this section I would like to focus on the exclusionary dynamics inherent in interactions between migrants and the people belonging to native communities where symbolic violence is part of day to day migrant experience as illustrated by Flam and Beuzamy (2011).

Using Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and combining it with feminist discourse, Flam & Beuzamy try to apply it to the negative aspects of the interactions taking place between natives and foreigners. In their view, symbolic violence stands for "denying the presence, skills or contributions of the other calling attention to real and symbolic status downgrading" (Flam and Beuzamy 2011: 222). According to them Bourdieu's findings assume that the victims of symbolic violence continue to remain unaware, passive and, therefore, are unhurt. However, the authors argue that in the case of migrants, the victims are aware of the violence, feel hurt and sometimes even react to such acts. In order to exemplify this regime of symbolic violence, the authors talk of the power of the human gaze, especially stares and scrutiny. Given that in today's society the interaction between people has grown more frequent and one's self-presentation is treated as an important aspect of conducting oneself in public as part of one's self-definition, individuals voluntarily lend themselves to the gaze of others. "But this gaze can turn into an instrument of super-ordination, superiority and contempt, of surveillance, control and discipline" (Flam and Beuzamy, 2011: 222). In the context of immigration discourse the gaze refers to "[T]he constituting, disciplining, subordinating and/or contemptuous gaze that [.....] is premised on nationalism. It is directed by natives at foreigners and is meant to reinforce the symbolic boundaries between nations and nationals ....." (Flam and Beuzamy 2011: 222-23). If applied to the first generation of migrants, one could agree with Bourdieu's argument that the victims of symbolic violence remain unhurt as they remain unaware and passive to the discourse or violence, though this presumption is contested by many feminist researchers. However, a certain kind of helplessness due to their socio-economic situation could lend the migrants look the other way in the face of such symbolic violence. Also, in other cases they would have no choice but to endure the exclusion meted out to them without reacting. South Asians, with their experience of

caste and religious differentiation containing inherent violence within South Asian communities, may have taken such discrimination as a part and parcel of life everywhere. However, peoples' identity perceptions undergo significant transformation under circumstances of violence, perceived as well as real (Flam and Beauzamy 2011).

In recent years, since the 9/11 bombings of the Twin Towers in the US, South Asian Muslims have become particular targets of racial profiling, singling out and discrimination (Abbas 2004). Time and again through personal stories, literary works and cinema this experience has been reiterated by various people. The hero of the movie, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mira Nair (2013) based on the novel by Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid is a literary example as to how one becomes victim of a nation's paranoia which is exhibited in the form of indiscriminate, institutional racism. Against the backdrop of the war on terror anyone who looked like a Muslim, even by supposed skin colour (Asian) became a target of suspicion and racial discrimination. Against such overt and symbolic violence one tries to find safety in one's essentialist identity: religious, ethnic or racial. The protagonist in her film, prior to his experience of institutional and symbolic violence, was a liberal professional who was at home with American ways of life. But after his experience of mistreatment at the airport by American intelligent agents, he begins to shun American ways and starts wearing a beard, avoided participating in public and social events and turned inwards into his Islamic identity. If one were to refer to British examples two cultural productions poignantly bring out Muslim life under state surveillance and social exclusion after the 9/11 attacks. Both the movies *Britz* (2007) and *Yasmin* (2005) clearly depict how normal people are driven to assume essentialist identities as a reaction to official and social exclusion and violence, symbolic as well as real. The number of European or American Muslim youngsters joining the newly founded 'Caliphate' (ISIS/ISIL) in Iraq and Syria also vindicates to some extent the negative impact of exclusionary, Islamophobic discourses deployed by Western governments.



Against the backdrop of such racial discrimination many Muslim women have taken to wearing the veil as a sign of protest. Similarly some Muslim men have increasingly chosen to grow a beard and wear jubba or kaftan. Hence, "it is often in the minutiae of daily life that the most wide reaching differences of identity are represented" (Woodward, 2003: 75). What in normal times would be mere differences in daily life, at times of violence, exclusion, crises and anxiety, take the symbolic meanings and become the markers of difference and identities. It is against such racist and exclusionary situations one tries to find solace in community and tries to protect the boundaries which were once fluid. Here the shared world of meaning collapses and identities grow rigid leading to the breakdown of social contracts. When this situation becomes part of the day to day life of migrants one could try to understand it as being targets of symbolic violence which can also be termed everyday racism. The stories of South Asian immigrants are typically illustrative here.

The experience of Nayur Z is illustrative when she was asked if the Muslim part of her became more important after 9/11. Certainly a Muslim identity which was unselfconsciously lived became a challenge and a question of self-respect. Against a world of exclusion she had to decide to own it up or to disown. Both choices were fraught with pain but self-respect takes hold and she decides to own it up. Here is how she narrates her experience:

I would say so simply because up until then it was just something that you were, just like growing up, you wore salwar kameez..... And being a Muslim was something that I was. I grew up...when you grow up your parents start showing you how to pray and things like that so it's like eating and drinking .... it's what you are; that's what you are. But there was no issue about .... I'm a Muslim. It was never a...put it in your face, I'm a Muslim; that's simply what I was. I was a woman and I was Muslim.

9/11 changed that because I used to wear a headscarf back in those days and then it became—what are you? And you had to make that decision in your own mind. Am I going to hide that I am a Muslim or am I going to be public that I am Muslim—anything to be afraid of, anything to be ashamed of? And I remember days after 9/11 standing in the queue in Boots just to get my sandwich and just looking around and noticing there was a massive queue next to me, as in the queue on the other side but there was nobody behind me. And it was only at that point the penny dropped. I was wearing my headscarf and nobody wanted to stand next to me. They would rather wait in a massive queue than stand next to me and that felt very hurtful at the time.

In Nayur's case her being a Muslim, an identity that is recognisable through her attire, becomes a mark of exclusion and anxiety. As for Nayur, who had never been a target of conscious exclusion in public before, it became a hurtful experience. Besides, she was interpellated (Brah 1999) into an international discourse on war on terror over which she had little control as she further testifies:

Growing up, I was a 'Paki' but it wasn't so much a thing that harmed me for life. I had so many friends from different cultures by the time I went to university and a lot of white friends as well ... it wasn't a huge issue for me. I was strong enough in myself that was not going to affect me. But 9/11, I think, changed the way of thinking of a lot of Muslims. Those who didn't think about being a Muslim before ... they were simply Muslim because that's what they were .... had to take stock and think, this enemy they keep talking about ... that's us, that's me, whether I like it or not.

Being a Muslim had not been a conscious identity she had to assert before, but the prevalent societal discourse and the symbolic violence and exclusion forced her and many of her community to find justification for being what they were. If such experiences were painful to Nayur and still she tries to be normal and carry on with life, there were others who do not take it lightly. Instead, they find ways and means to escape it; some even rush to the fold of Jihadi extremist groups and, as Brah (2007) argues, become suicide bombers, which is a social production.

Avtar Brah (1996), as she narrates in her book, was herself initiated into such a discourse when she arrived in the UK and was called a “Paki”. Nayur recalls a more violent incident that had happened to her family and to her sister. Here, it is a matter of being forced into essentialist conceptions of identities from both sides: by one’s own family and community as well as the majority community:

I would say growing up I felt Pakistani simply because growing up you’re made to feel it by the outside world too because unfortunately, growing up we had the odd ‘Paki’ comment thrown at us. We were brought up where...when I was growing up in my school there was only about four Asians in the whole school and three of those were me and my two sisters so there were very few of us there. We had issues of racism in Cardiff; we had bricks thrown through our window when we were children. My little sister was about five, I think, at the time. She was kicked by a skinhead, a grown man, and his shoe print covered the whole bottom half of her leg so he implanted his footprint on her. She was five going to primary school, nursery at the time but he thought it was okay to kick her because she’s coloured. And she wasn’t... she’s actually very white skinned, pink cheeked girl but because she was wearing salwar kameez, he knew she was coloured. So growing up it was more a case of: we are Pakistani and they are making you aware you are Pakistani because look at what they’re saying to you, look what they’re doing to you so

don't forget what you are. And my mother would say things like, 'Well, you can wear as many Western clothes as you want to, they'll still call you a 'Paki' so remember what you are.

In the face of overt racism the first reaction from migrants is to grow more stubbornly essentialist and try to be further rooted and entrenched in one's religious or cultural ways as most literary and media examples (films) show. Nayur's and her family's reactions were no different. However, for a growing up girl, her identity is not only a product of such negative experiences. There are positive experiences with others that help her assume her Welsh identity more and more which her experience further illustrates:

Where I was growing up initially you would get skinheads and you would get the bricks in the window, although that was balanced out with my neighbours were my aunties and my uncles – Auntie Eileen and Auntie Mary ...

When faced with these positive and negative experiences, one also feels safer in one's own community and numbers as Madan Sarup (1996) has argued. However, such negative experiences do not determine totally one's view of life about others. It is the contingencies of day to day living that determine how one wants to view oneself and the world. Such experiences do drive people towards embracing their essentialist identities as happened to Nayur and her family. However, at the same time, she sees her Welsh identity was also consolidated by her life in Cardiff:

And then I moved to a different part of Cardiff where there was a bit more of an Asian community. You felt safer because sometimes safety (is) in numbers..... And there we got to know more people of Pakistan and you got your identity there, and I wouldn't even say it was a Muslim identity. The Muslim identity, I think, didn't come

about until my late teens, very late teens, early twenties, but then 9/11 kicked in everybody's identity. We knew we were Pakistani. Yeah, you were Muslim as well but we were Pakistani and as I grew older then my Welsh identity kicked in a lot more. I now consider myself a Welsh Muslim. My parents are Pakistani and my heritage is Pakistani but I am Welsh. I am not British, I am Welsh—I am very much Welsh.

Nayur neither succumbed to the pressures from her family and community nor did she succumb to racist violence directed against her to find complete solace with her essentialist identity as a Pakistani Muslim. She successfully negotiated an identity that is Welsh, Pakistani and Muslim without much of an internal conflict. South Asians and other migrants have undergone such overt and covert racism throughout their years of settlement in the UK. Taking such experiences in their stride, as years have gone by, the migrants have learned to negotiate the culture codes imbued with symbolic violence and the institutional discourses of exclusion and have begun to fight back through their participation in every day discourses. This is when they enter the discursive arena of the public sphere, though with unequal power. Despite their religious identities occupying a considerable place in their self-understanding, the South Asians in the UK very often describe themselves as having multiple identities, a self-perception that makes multi-cultural Britain a modern democracy. This is well expressed by Kiswar R. She says:

I think more Welsh than British because my children (were) born here. If I go back home to Pakistan I feel a bit strange there now because parents gone so I don't go very often now, about eight years, ten years.

Wales playing--I was supporting Wales yesterday. I was really hurt when they lost the match of rugby yesterday. [.....] But if England and Pakistan playing I support Pakistan. And if India and England

playing we support India. I don't know, perhaps it's our colour – image is wrong thing.

Multiple loyalties are a hallmark of hybrid identities. Depending on circumstances people assume identities that make them see the world from multiple perspectives.

With their present experience as people who continually experience multiple identities and modes of belonging due to their history of migratory routes, people of South Asian origin can be described as truly postmodern in their existence. And, as globalised and postmodern, having taken multiple journeys to migrate, the routes have been defining them more than their roots. Hence, at this point in their history any claim of a unified self is an impossible dream as Hall (1992: 277) put it:

If we feel we have a unified identity ..... it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves.... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one which we could identify with – at least temporarily.

Hence, identities are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed along the journey of a postmodern life. They are efforts at engaging with discourses in the process of negotiating belonging with a spirit of openness to embrace multiple identities and, in this way, build communities that recognise and value difference without having recourse to essentialist positions or resorting to exclusivist and exclusionary discourses. Here, I would like to stress the value of identity as strategic rather than reactionary.

## IDENTITY AS STRATEGY

Acknowledging the difficulty that the concept of identity poses in its connotations of essentialism, Hall (2000) argues that there are two ways the concept of identity can be fruitfully employed. The first way is to treat the very concept in a deconstructed sense in order to be stripped of its essentialist underpinnings and use it to explain an emergent reality such as migrant identity. The second way is to consider its centrality when we discuss issues of agency and politics in a social setting. While employing the concept in these circumstances, one does not adhere to its old understanding of a “centred subject of social practice” (Hall 2000: 16) but think in terms of a subject of discursive practices who is displaced or decentred and in constant evolution due to its negotiatory character. Hence, the concept of identity deployed in migration discourses is not essentialist, but a “strategic and positional one” (Hall 2000: 17). His approach accepts that:

[I]dentities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiple constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall 2000: 17)

This is so because identities are constructed within certain discourses and practices in specific historical and institutional settings using specific communicative strategies. They are products of specific power arrangements which work through the “marking of difference and exclusion” (Hall, 2000: 17). As identities are constructed through difference they assume and acknowledge the role of the Other in their formation. Hence, “every identity has at its ‘margin’, an excess, something more” and the “unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational, is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure .....” (Hall 2000: 18). Every unity proclaimed as identity, whether it is individual, religious, caste or national, is “constructed within

the play of power and exclusion” and, therefore, not natural and inevitable. This leads to the conclusion that every identity can be destabilised because of what it excludes or leaves behind (Hall 2000). Understood in this sense, all identities are discursive productions (Wodak 2009). Hence, national identities are not finished products with which migrants need to fit in or assimilate themselves into, nor are migrant identities finished products that remain grafted on to their roots or places of origin or culture. As identities on both sides undergo constant evolution, they create new ways of understanding the self, the community, the nation and the terms of belonging. This takes place by way of discourses which are predominantly narratives of every sort and at every level: individual, communitarian and institutional. However, world is quite far from realising the contingent nature of identities and borders and, hence, remains a victim of the deployment of essentialist identities based on national, religious, tribal and cultural boundaries which are a source of exclusion, racism, conflict, violence and wars. If identities and borders are at the root of conflicts, identities destabilised due to the effects of globalization equally suffer from the existential anxiety of extinction or miscegenation, resulting in new conflicts that produce violence.

## CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE

If globalisation has caused large-scale migration of peoples, it has also acted, in effect, as a catalyst in destabilising traditional identities (Sarup 1996). Today people’s self-understanding and their perception of the world is mediated by their experience of movement, i.e. the journeys that they undertake. The concepts of home and homeland have become inadequate loci to situate one’s identities. Moreover, with migration, it is not only the migrant whose identities are altered, but also that of the receiving community and nations. Hence, any earlier understandings about concepts such as nation, citizen and belonging require revision, as those concepts were a product of particular historical contexts. Those categories are no more adequate to capture the reality of what is going on today locally as well as globally. This is well illustrated by Strath (2011) in his analysis of the European project. According to him, the European project began with the search for a common European identity that eventually turned



out to be exclusivist and totalizing. In the meanwhile due to the historic role played by Europe in the world by way of imperialism and slavery, and now, in the sphere of economic globalization the old European Project based on ethnic nationalism has become archaic. It cannot address adequately the effects of globalization such as migration, transnational belonging, multinational loyalties and immensely pluralist populations. This has necessitated the redefinition of the very notions of nation, borders and citizenship and related institutions. Hence, Strath's calls for a new, inclusive definition of what it means to be European or belonging to a nation make very good sense. This is because the "self-images and images of the 'Other' that dominated the common sense and even policy discourses so far, cannot be treated as static entities, but are elements in a continuous flux... Emigration functions as a catalyst for the creation and for the questioning of images and self-images" (Strath 2011: 34) as every encounter leads to questioning of the taken for granted and new understanding. This happens with every encounter and all the parties involved in the encounter. It is doubly evident in a migrant's journey. Strath says: "The migrant is in a situation of betwixt and between, in a liminal or transitional stage between cultures and countries. This situation leads to a questioning of both culture of origin and the newly encountered culture," (Strath 2011: 35) as many of the interviews referred above show. Any society that has to deal with migration and the altered state of communities and nations must accept this dynamic and provide legal frameworks with an inclusive approach.

Moreover, we do not any more have the privilege of ascribed or pre-given identities to fall back on in a fast changing and fast moving world in which we identify with multiple aspects of the world presented to us. And in this context all "[...] individual-related and system-related identities overlap a great deal in the identity of an individual. To a certain extent, individuals bear the characteristics of one or more collective groups or systems to which they belong" (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). Hence, today we have multiple or hybrid identities.

The discussion about identities has revealed that every identity refers to inclusion and exclusion, and the way of understanding identities as hybrid or as multiple can function as a corrective and counteract the practices of exclusion and differentiation. Where identities overlap there arise grounds of contact and understanding. Whereas “.....in cases where an identity directed against others is one-sidedly over-emphasized or overestimated and all ‘identity-distance’ [.....] is lost – which is the case within every form of fundamentalism – conflicts can escalate to dangerous proportions” (Wodak et al. 2009: 17). World conflicts of today and of the past bear ample evidence to such an essentialist conception of identities. In contrast, when people become bearers of multiple identities, dialogue is possible and negotiations result in peaceful settlement of disputes.

Stuart Hall (1996) emphasises this issue further arguing that globalisation engendered by a market economy and consequent mass migration of people has created favourable contexts for cultural hybridisation. Laclau (1992) corroborates the view of multiple subject positions operating in a democratic context where the universal is incarnated in particular identities without cancelling out other identities through their exclusionary logic. Only such an approach enables democratic possibilities where all identities are acknowledged, all differences recognised, where a larger inclusive identity such as nation can function without conflict or violence. Can we imagine such a possibility? The search for and recognition of ways of life in reality and art that bear witness to ‘ethics over identities’ and help us ‘think beyond borders’ will form a new research project following from the current discussion.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION: MIGRANT MEMORIES: ALTERNATE DISCOURSE

#### INTRODUCTION

*"At the beginning of the twenty first century the conditio humana cannot be understood nationally or locally but only globally" - Ulrich Beck<sup>34</sup>*

As mentioned in the introduction, my research interest stems from my personally felt shock at the nature of British political and media discourses about immigration. I came to the UK from India having worked in regional media and community service for a number of years. There, I had witnessed what divisive communalism, majoritarian politics, and nationalist ideologies premised upon cultural identities<sup>35</sup> can do to destroy cultural diversity or multicultural living. The relentless targeting of the immigrants in politics and the media in Britain strongly reminded me of the decades long polarising discourses by Hindutva fanatics in India which had resulted in communal violence against Muslims in 1992 through 2002 re-enacting by far the 1947 *British India* Partition violence. Knowing well what such discourses can do in the longer run I set about analysing the nature of these discourses in the UK and began to question what might be causing these discourses gain (at)traction among people today not merely in Great Britain but also elsewhere in the European Union. Now, concluding my research, I would like to present summary reflections on the larger picture from which this research emerged, what I set out doing, what I was able to identify as issues at play, and what new avenues of research it can open up.

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<sup>34</sup> Beck, Ulrich (2002), 'The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies,' Theory, Culture & Society (Sage, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), 19(1-2): 17-44.

<sup>35</sup> The reference here is to the majoritarian and communal politics of Hindutva that has been dividing communities and destroying secular, democratic traditions of India since the 1950s.

## THE CONTEXT: THE LARGER PICTURE

As written at the beginning of this research, my theoretical explorations about the causes of the heightened pitch of immigration discourses in the UK led me to account for this phenomenon in the deepening processes of globalisation forces thrust upon the world through the financial markets of neoliberal economic policies. As a spatial global process, its key effects have led to the flow of resources from the poorer to the richer countries while wreaking havoc on the environment and cultural life of the poorer countries, not to mention the internal, communal or sectarian conflicts that it has engendered (Appadurai 2006). Within all the nation states around the globe the process of neoliberal economics has resulted in the transfer of jobs and resources from the poorer to the richer regions, and individuals in them. The nation states, at the mercy of global finance capital, follow the path of fiscal consolidation and have been forced to privatise public assets and abdicate, in the bargain, a large part of their social and welfare responsibilities towards their own citizens. This, along with the globalisation of war in the form of war on terror, has led to the destabilisation of several countries and impoverishment of large sections of their populations resulting in hordes of migrants crossing over to European and other Western countries where they end up competing for scarce jobs and social security with the already impoverished, if not insecure, native populations. The resulting anxieties and backlash in Britain, the European Union, and elsewhere have created a fertile field for xenophobic politics and anti-immigrant discourse (Balibar 2009). In this way the bulldozing forces of globalisation or market fundamentalism have created cultural anxieties about people's loss of identity.

Consequently, the affected communities have taken shelter under the security of their *archaic* or *traditional* identities based on caste, religion, language, territory, race, gender etc. (Castells 2010). These twin developments of global market and cultural fundamentalism are in conflict with each other all over the world, which Benjamin Barber (1995) calls *McWorld* vs *Jihad*. Viewed from this perspective, one can agree with Ulrich Beck (2002) that one cannot grasp our present reality from our entrenched

identity positions, namely, country, community, religion, race, caste, gender or ethnic identity. We require a global perspective.

The migration of South Asians to the UK is at least 300-400 years old due to their historical relationship with Britain as the colonial ruler and postcolonial 'hegemon' (Gramsci and Buttigieg 1992). Despite this historic relationship, today, they have become victims of discourses and policies stemming from the conflicts between market and cultural fundamentalism, the two faces of the *McWorld* vs *Jihad*. My research employs this discussion on globalisation, neoliberalism, and the emergence of cultural fundamentalism as a context to understand how, under such conditions, nations such as Great Britain with long history of immigration and colonialism and liberal and secular democratic traditions, behave and how various communities affected by these processes interact with the nation state and with each other. As the anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, Neo-Nazi and Right-leaning groups in Europe are in ascendance by appropriating the state-sponsored 'war on terror' discourses and other similar policies implemented by the state through surveillance and suspicion resulting, consequently, in the rise of cultural fundamentalism (such as Islamism), immigrants are some of the most vulnerable groups that are affected by these processes (Kundnani 2012).

Being a South Asian immigrant, I started questioning how, given their particular history and migration trajectory, other South Asian immigrants might view themselves against these exclusionary and racist discourses. Knowing well the story of my own family's migration to various parts of the world<sup>36</sup> and spending enough money to get professionally educated, and having decided to explore better opportunities offered by globalisation, I could not remain unaffected by these discourses. On the contrary, I felt a sense of betrayal, an internal hurt and it resulted in some sort of protest. Moreover, having observed keenly how communitarian and

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<sup>36</sup> My own siblings and cousins have migrated to the Middle East, UK, USA and elsewhere, as professional rather than as lower cadre migrant workers, not because they were poor in India but because they wanted to earn better, live better and educate their children better.

identity-based nationalist discourses lead to majoritarian politics and how detrimental they are to the survival and development of diversity-oriented, democratic societies, I firmly believe that such discourses need contesting everywhere through counter-narratives because grand narratives, constructed through the help of archival material and by privileging dominant narratives as normative, often function as instruments of silencing or delegitimizing the voices that lack power (Foucault 2006, Derrida 1996, Butalia 2000, Pandey 2012).

In Britain narratives about the life and contribution of South Asians to the British economy and society are scarce or, if found at all, are made to fall in line with the general, dominant British national narratives whether cultural or historical concerning nationhood and the place of migrants therein. Hence the question generally is: how can immigrants, who lack archival, political or media support (or, power) counter such discourses and present their own rightful position, participation, and contribution to Great Britain in their historical and current relationship? Are there sources and powers outside the archives and media that can provide authority to their narratives which can then be utilised to counter the prevalent, dominant discourses?

Basing on the theoretical arguments formulated by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), Jan Assmann (1995), Paul Ricoeur (2005) and Dominic LaCapra (in Chapter 2), I have tried to explore such an alternative and equally authoritative source invoking the role of individual and collective memory of South Asians living in South Wales. In order to understand their experiences of migration and settlement I have tried to find answers to the following question: Given their diverse backgrounds and histories, what do immigrants make of their life in the UK despite their being lumped together as 'migrants' – shirkers, scroungers, health tourists and invaders – who come to take away jobs, claim benefits and build their own communities? Especially, given their Indian relationship with and the contribution to make what Great Britain is today, how do South Asians in the UK (specifically those from South Wales) see themselves and Great Britain, their new home?

While my research happens to be in the middle of the conflicting societal processes of *McWorld vs Jihad* and their outcomes of anxiety and identity projections, the interviews and the responses have taken a longer period of concern for the interviewees, namely, their migration and settlement, spanning across several decades and multiple movements. However, their experiences of settlement and identity evolution are affected by the present context in their life in Great Britain, namely, under the current discourses on immigration. This way if viewing South Asian immigrant experience in the UK falls in line with what Halbwachs (1992) theorises about the role of memory in peoples' life. According to him the recollection and the meaning our memories acquire today depend upon our present life circumstances. This manner of deploying memory is evident in what my research has been able to identify in the memory narratives of South Asians living in South Wales.

Tapping into peoples' memories directly is an established method in social science research (Thompson 2000). This I did by having recourse to the memory narratives of South Asian immigrants themselves because the key causes of their migration are buried amidst their experiences of life under colonialism, communalism, partition, migration and settlement (Brah 1996). Having interviewed a fairly random representative cross-section of South Asians living in South Wales, I have arrived at certain conclusions which are, in my opinion, significant and can contribute to making immigration discourses more nuanced than they are at present.

## WHAT MY RESEARCH IDENTIFIED

Given the perspective from which I approached to understand the migrant world, the narratives of South Asian immigrants to South Wales can be considered an alternate or counter-discourse from a minority perspective as it begs to differ from the dominant British discourse (Mufti 1998). These narratives, though they contain individual memories, exhibit many of the key themes of the collective memory of a people who belonged predominantly to a common heritage of an entrepreneur farmer or petty trader class (Halbwachs 1992). Hence, the social frameworks exhibited by their memories contain themes such as a multicultural, multi-religious, often rural,

community living prior to their migration (as discussed in Chapter 4 using interviews with Visram V, Ratna H, Muhammad Rahmat and others). These memories from a unique background place them neither among the British middle nor among the working classes, a point also observed by Avtar Brah (1996). This unique positioning had provided them with a critical perspective of British society making their integration into British society a cautious project. This caution and suspicion could also be a reason why they tried to stick to their own identity by forming communities.

## PARTITION

The experience of the Partition of British India and family memories of suffering violence, deaths of family members, rape and abduction of women and children, loss of home, land and livelihoods; loss of country and fears of the future dominate the narratives of many whose families were victims of this epochal event, the British India Partition (as narrated in interviews with Jaswant S, Kiswar R and Dr Uzair). This only goes to prove how spread out the presence and effect of the Partition of 1947 is upon the people of the subcontinent wherever they go. Almost every interview that touched upon the memory of British India Partition referred to the aberration of the partition as an idea, the irresponsible manner of sundering a nation by a retreating colonial power, the distance that it created among the peoples within the new partitioned areas and wherever they moved to as migrants, with their religious identities taking precedence over all the other cultural bonds, and a nostalgia or a dream of unity as people belonging to a land and culture. With these memories dominant among them, despite the long lapse of time, they exhibit the key Diaspora features of homeland orientation which forms part of their South Asian identity.

## BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Most of the narratives reminisce about dreams and hopes of a better future when they set out, the adventurous decisions to leave home and the loved ones, and the undertaking of journeys, sometimes hazardous, to a land (Great Britain) as desirous but unknown, as the dreamscape itself as narrated in interviews by Suhel R, Sudha V,



Maya P, Hari P and others. The narratives are also about the continued efforts to negotiate belonging and struggles against exclusion, racism, and exploitation (Wahida K, Nayur Z). Contrary to the stereotypical discourses about migrants as health tourists, benefit scroungers and those sapping national identity without integrating themselves, almost all the interviewees recall their relentless search for jobs and hard work. Many of them speak about venturing into self-employment as taxi drivers or shop owners, being concerned about educating children and participating in the national social, economic and cultural life.

Here, I would like to make a note that in my research, though it could have paid more importance to the gendered aspects of migration and settlement of South Asians, I have not managed to discuss these finer nuances here. This important area avails me with opportunities to explore it in future research.

With all those positive and negative experiences, the South Asians in the UK have fashioned a unique identity of their own which continues to evolve within British national identity. This unique identity is fashioned out of their roots (their ancestral land and culture) and the routes that they have traversed (the journeys that they undertook as migrants which include their life in the UK as immigrants). Among all the narratives one aspect stands out: their communitarian identity often displayed through religious affiliations as corroborated by Tariq Modood (1997). All these strategic identities are consciously embraced to forge political alliances and fight against prejudice, exclusion, injustice, and exploitation. However, despite such noble intentions, their politics is forced to lug along the trajectory of identity politics due to the polarising political discourses in Great Britain, a challenge that the entire nation needs to address. This is cited as an important reason against British multiculturalism; though, despite its limitations, many view multiculturalism as a reasonable approach towards migrant integration (Modood 2005a) and why it is important for immigrants and Great Britain at the present juncture in history and how South Asians benefit from such an approach in their struggle to define their own identity and also to negotiate their belonging to Britain. This crucial issue is discussed in the following section.

## BRITISH MULTICULTURALISM AND SOUTH ASIANS

Bhiku Parekh (2007), on his part, distinguishes two distinct ways of understanding multiculturalism that are in vogue in the UK today. One way refers to “cultural isolationism or ghettoization based on the relativist view that every cultural community is self-contained and self-authenticating and has a right to live by its norms” (p130). This view sees cultures from an essentialist perspective, treating them as isolated from one another, sometimes even opposed to each other in civilizational terms (Huntington 1993). Many fundamentalist groups exemplify this view through their living and dealing with other groups. Some intellectuals follow this argument and view multiculturalism as the enemy of society.

However, an alternative way sees very positive value in multiculturalism. According to that view “every culture has its limitations and benefits from a dialogue with others” (Parekh 2007: 131). This is a dialogical view of multiculturalism where various cultures interact with each other and expand their vision of human life and devise new ways of living together. This view presupposes a reflexive approach where groups look at themselves from the perspective of others and by doing so gain self-knowledge that “creates conditions of human freedom and rationality” (Parekh 2007: 131). While respecting all cultures this approach questions the “hegemony of the dominant culture, exposes its biases and limitations and helps create a composite culture” (Parekh 2007: 131) which is owned by the groups that create it. In this sense multiculturalism is “open, interactive, dynamic and creative” (Parekh 2007: 131) facilitating equality, plurality and integration (Modood 2006). Here *equality* refers to dignity as well as respect. For the subordinate groups this equality is to claim that “they should not be marginal, subordinate or excluded; that they too - their values, norms, and voice - should be part of the structuring of the public space” (Parekh 2007: 64-65). *Plurality* refers to the ‘multi-’ element of multiculturalism which must accept the presence of multiple groups originating from multiple geographic spaces, languages, cultures, religions etc. occupying multiple socio-economic positions.

*Integration* refers to minorities negotiating their belonging in an interactive way and in the process undergoing mutual change in interaction and redefining the very way of being British. This interactive process would result in an inclusive British identity. Here, the 'difference' is recognised and acknowledged as a contributing factor to the richness of life while enhancing the commonalities among various identities. Hence, multiculturalism can be defined as the challenging, the dismantling, and the remaking of public identities in order to achieve an equality of citizenship that is neither merely individualistic nor premised on assimilation. This way of conceiving multiculturalism especially makes room for the existence and recognition of group based identities that are neither immutable nor forced to change by the state. Such a multicultural accommodation while allowing new forms of belonging and citizenship also leaves room for the emergence of hyphenated identities based on the origin and the Diaspora links which are so vital for transnational or multinational families (Modood 2005). My research amply demonstrates how the newly arrived immigrants are able eventually to form cultural communities of language, faith, nationality etc. facilitated by the British multiculturalist approach to social integration.

The community orientation and identification among immigrants is seen not only as a hindering factor for their national integration but even as contributing factors for maintaining rigid cultural boundaries and essentialist identities. To that extent multiculturalism is seen as a negative approach by some (Beck 2006).

Given the recent development of disaffection towards the British State and attraction towards extremist religious ideologies, especially among young British Muslims, there is much sense in this criticism if multiculturalism were understood as a license to maintain rigid cultural and group boundaries. However, as Bhiku Parekh (2007) and Tariq Modood (1998) have already argued, conceiving of identities exclusively as essentialist or anti-essentialist, does not capture the fluid and changing nature of collective identities. For Modood no ethnic identity is static at all times. Identities continually undergo change and transform individualities into commonalities according to changed social situations. They are continually affected by transnational

processes or international dynamics. Ethnic group identities are neither uniform nor monolithic. There are internal differences and differentiations, and individuals and groups constantly interact with other cultures and ways of living, borrowing from others and evolving constantly (Benhabib 2002). However, the change presupposes something that already exists and some of these aspects remain constant while a number of other aspects embracing change. Hence, once we accept the 'internal complexity and the essential contestability of cultures' it is important to distinguish between those movements that struggle for recognition and expand the democratic participation and those that foster exclusion and exclusivist discourse that leads to cultural hierarchy and is motivated by 'conservationist impulses'. The assumption here is that the new groups will incorporate themselves into established societies through a process of cultural hybridisation of various sorts. And in this process, a mutual give and take between the immigrants and established society will happen by way of "*boundary crossing, boundary blurring, or boundary shifting*" between various cultures. In a democratic society this process of integration and cultural hybridisation need not lead to the extinction of cultures. It could help preserve cultural distinctiveness, and identity could still continue to be a dynamic resource (Benhabib 2002).

While we need to reject any conception of 'imagined community' that is based on the imaginary utopian or originary homogeneous identity at the extrusion of 'otherness', the objective is to construct a 'community-in-difference', which, while acknowledging our ineradicable differences, recognizes the importance of dialogue. However, in order to critique the exclusionary strategies and practices by institutions and individuals in some contexts, there is need to recognise that to defend their own fragile boundaries the disempowered groups will continue to have recourse to certain "forms of 'strategic essentialism'. Sometimes this involves the defence of domestic space as a realm of cultural autonomy" (Morley 2001: 441). It is in the context of negotiating with power relations and to defend oneself from the onslaught of majority culture and the ubiquitous reach of the state control apparatuses that disempowered groups resort to certain identity positions. How this dynamic works among minority groups is well

demonstrated by Gerd Baumann (1996) in his study of intercultural relations in Southall referred to by Morley. According to Baumann, in order to mobilize for political action and to compete for resources that are distributed on an 'ethnicised' basis, members of the disempowered groups will deliberately reify and 'essentialise' their identities at crucial moments. However, at other times and in other contexts, they will readily and routinely undercut such fixed claims on their identity by having recourse to more fluid discourses (Morley 2001). My own research among the South Asians highlights this aspect of identity assumption. If, in general, they identify themselves as South Asians, in some other circumstances, such as attack on their religion or country of origin, they take shelter under their specific identities as I had argued earlier (See chapter 5).

The hybrid, multiple identities strategically adopted by South Asian immigrants in the UK, as analysed in this research, show that a creative manner of belonging to new countries of arrival is possible when one thinks beyond the essentialist conception of identities. However, as seen from the experience of Nayur Z and Wahida K, the exclusionary, racist or overtly violent attitudes towards minority immigrant communities have the potential of alienating those who are subjected to these attitudes and engendering a group of people who grow more and more disaffected with the state and the nation of their adoption. The recent developments about many 'disaffected' Muslim youth joining fundamentalist Muslim organisations is a case in point, though this area requires further research where one needs to ask why there is disaffection among some youth and not others. Given the exclusionary and racist discourses in the polity, the tendencies to be alienated or disaffected are real. An inclusive approach in national discourses by incorporating immigrant collective memories into national collective memory can provide a sense of belonging as indicative of the identity perceptions of South Asians in South Wales.

In conclusion, as against the demands of cultural monism (*McWorld*) and cultural fundamentalism (*Jihad*), what is required is a political struggle that respects and values difference while, at the same time, fosters communal forms of solidarity. In such a

society people will be free to pursue a variety of goals in life treating one another as fellow travellers. This will be a society consisting of multiple interest groups donning multiple identities, (or better, identity positions) that are ever ready to negotiate with one another in a multipronged fight against the forces of exclusion, racism, inequality and oppression. Hence, especially for migrants everywhere such struggle will have to focus on the destructive tendencies of globalisation and neoliberal capitalism, on the one hand, and the lethal tendencies of fundamentalist, exclusivist and violent identity groups raising their heads all over the world in the form of communitarianism and racism on the other. As migrants and minorities who will be the prime sufferers from the effects of fundamentalist, neoconservative religious, authoritarian and totalitarian movements, they need watch their own identity politics does not descend into essentialist identity battles. (At the present juncture there are serious fears that such things are possible. Protracted alienation of some groups of immigrants, especially the Muslim youth, through Islamophobic discourses and surveillance policies push them choose to join extremist religious ideologies. Why and how it happens is a serious and pressing area of research that my work opens up to).

This demands that we conceive of a human imaginary beyond the nationalist, racist, culturalist or casteist outlook. A cosmopolitan outlook which questions the claimed and proclaimed universalism of particular traditions such as Europe, the West, Islam, Zionism, Hindutva etc. and endorses as normal the phenomena such as Diaspora, cultural melange or hybridity would rescue them from pejorative connotations (Beck 2006). At this level of thinking we begin to view our being in the world as a relational and interdependent existence requiring a global ethic to challenge forces that destroy plurality and the cosmopolitan existence of all beings on earth.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In my research what emerges is the fact that the migration of people, especially of South Asian origin, was a complex phenomenon involving the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism, the partition of nations, nativist movements (such as those in Africa)

and, more recently, life chances offered or destroyed by globalisation and neoliberalism. In this process migrants take enormous risks and take multiple journeys to arrive at lands they believe are prosperous and offer opportunities to realize their dreams. This is the reason why many South Asians ended up in the UK in large numbers especially after the Second World War. In the course of their journeys (as multiple migrations) and settlement they not only contributed towards the national life of Great Britain, as colonial power, but also, in turn, ended up assuming multiple and often hybrid identities which they deploy selectively in order to benefit politically. As migrants, they were at once the beneficiaries of globalisation as well as victims of neoliberalism and the consequent xenophobia and cultural fundamentalism. The fundamentalisms (market as well as cultural – *McWorld* and *Jihad*) at work today pose the greatest danger to the globalised world and, especially, the migrant world, which has come to embrace multiculturalism and pluralism as modes of existence for humans as national as well as post-national communities. They raise the spectre of identity and communitarian politics which can only divide people and create further conflicts and genocidal violence. In such an eventuality it is the immigrants and all minorities, who are perceived as different, other, and suspicious, becoming targets of xenophobic politics. This calls for a new way of looking at the world and evolving a new political discourse which values all humans as singular and evolving through a process of individuation and, therefore, worthy of equal rights and freedom. There is no once-and-for-all, fixed essence as identity. There is, instead, a process of individual and social *individuation* in interactive evolution (Simondon 1992). It is a space governed by a minority ethics where everyone sees oneself from the metaphoric as well as the real image of the migrant, the dispossessed, the stateless, and those surviving in a state of bare life (Agamben 1998).

My thesis is a reflection where the migrant is a concrete individual who risks his/her life pursuing an imaginary land, as against one's homeland long left-behind, in view of setting up a new life and a new home. In doing so the migrant is a metaphor and a symbol of our human condition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and our desire to bring about an ideal human community where there are no essences called identities that divide us,

but perpetually individuating and evolving individuals, communities and nations where everyone is welcomed and recognised for what one is. Being a representative of bare life, as Agamben (1998) argues, the migrant as an insecure minority is the point of departure for any ethical and political organisation of the future.

The South Asians, a Diaspora community, stand as a supreme example of the evolving nature of a networked, mobile world with multiple identities while being, at the same time, responsible citizens of a nation wherever they drop their anchor. While their memories make their history present, together their memory and history give them a sense of what they are (identity) which is in a process of continuous evolution (individuation). It is precisely in this sense that they are unique (singular) but also universal representatives of a world to come. Their memory narratives, as minority discourse, continually question and reconfigure what it is meant to be British and what could possibly be multicultural Britain. The importance of minority discourses in a democratic society needs exploring further because of the ethical foundation that these discourses offer for consolidating secular, democratic societies where differences are valued and recognised as part and parcel of national self-understanding.



## *APPENDIX - I*

### PARTICIPANT DETAILS (INTERVIEWEES)

All the participants (interviewees) of my research project were from South Wales (mostly Cardiff). In order to maintain their anonymity I have not mentioned their addresses. Instead, to give a picture of their migration trajectory I have mentioned here where they were born, from where they started their migratory journey from, their gender, year of birth or age, religion and approximate year of arrival to Britain (or whatever information available).

1. Shameem Z, Female, Muslim, Born in Karachi Pakistan 1948, migrated to Britain in 1972.
2. Dr. Uzair, Male, Muslim, (aged c 70), Born in Mainpuri, Uttarpradesh, India, migrated to Karachi Pakistan in 1953 and from there to Britain.
3. Ziyauddin A, Male, Muslim, Born in 1950 in Karachi Pakistan, migrated to Britain in 1980.
4. Kiswar R, Female, Muslim, (aged c 60), Born in Yakubpur Pakistan, migrated to Britain in 1980.
5. Nayoor Z, Female, Muslim, (aged c 40), Born in Cardiff, her father had migrated to Britain in the 1960's and mother in 1976.
6. Jaswant S, Male, Sikh, (aged c 80), Born in Lahore Pakistan, his family migrated to Britain in 1947.
7. Sher SK, Male, Sikh, Born in 1916, Punjab India, first migrated to Nairobi at the age of 22 and then migrated to Britain from Dar-e-Salam Tanzania in 1991.
8. Channi K, Male, Sikh, (aged c 65), Born Dar-e-Salaam, Tanzania, migrated to Britain in 1961.
9. Dr Maya R, Female, Hindu, Born in 1932 in Bihar India, migrated to Britain in 1968.
10. Chandy R, Male, Hindu, Born in 1935 in Calcutta (Kolkotta) India, Migrated to Britain in 1968.

11. Dr Mohammed H, Male, (aged c 65), Muslim, Born in Bihar India, migrated to Britain in 1990.
12. Ratna H, Male, Hindu, Born in 1945 in Gujarat India, migrated to Kenya in 1956 and then to Britain in 1966.
13. Suhel R, Male, Muslim, Born in 1959 in Bangladesh, migrated to Britain in 1991.
14. Brij P, Male, Sikh, Born in 1951 in Haryana India, migrated to Britain in 1981.
15. Visram V, Male, Hindu, Born in 1953 in Gujarat India, migrated to Kenya in 1971 and to Britain in 1975.
16. Sudha V, Female, Hindu, Born in 1942 Tabora Tazaniya, migrated to Britain in 1972.
17. Vilas P, Female, Hindu, Born in Mumbai 1966, migrated to Britain in 1987.
18. Hari P, Male, Hindu, Born in 1949 in Jinja Uganda, migrated to Britain 1972.
19. Vinod A, Male, Hindu, Born in 1946 in Malawi, migrated to Britain in 1967.
20. Vimla P, Female, Hindu, Born in Kampala Uganda in 1952, migrated to Britain in 1972.
21. Maya P, Female, Hindu, Born in Kampala Uganda in 1963, migrated to Britain in 1981.
22. Mohammed R, Male, Muslim, Born in 1942 in Bangladesh, migrated to Britain in 1963.
23. Darshini M, Female, Hindu, Born in 1991 in London, her grandparents and parents had migrated to Britain in 1972 from Kenya.

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