

Migration and kinship: the differential effect of marriage rules on the processes of Punjabi migration to Britain

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Now that Britain's South Asian population has grown to include well over a million people, it has become dangerously misleading to regard all its members as forming a single homogeneous social group. To be sure, all Britons of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent have something in common. On the one hand, they all share - thanks to the routine use of skin colour as a social marker by their white fellow citizens - the experience of racial exclusion; and on the other, they also share certain cultural commonalities, especially in domestic contexts. Varied and changing though their personal lifestyles may be, their preferences are still inspired at least as much by their roots in the sub-continent as by their more local, British, experience. Yet even though 'Asians' may consequently appear to constitute - at least from the outside a more or less distinctive social category in Britain's increasingly polyethnic society, it does not follow that it is appropriate to regard them all as belonging to a single community.

Firstly, these broad commonalities are but rarely used as vehicles for corporate action: real communities are invariably much more restrictively organised. This is hardly surprising. Even though they share common origins in the sub-continent, South Asian settlers in Britain are of diverse regional, linguistic, religious, caste and class origins; and it was around these specificities - reinforced by the even more tightly parochial loyalties of kinship that networks of social solidarity and mutual support were, and continue to be, constructed. So, even when large numbers of people of South Asian origin live in a particular area, it does not follow that they will necessarily form a single monolithic community. On the contrary, most such settlements include a multiplicity of caste and kin-based networks, whose members in turn compete almost as much as they cooperate. Moreover, most such networks are relatively small: few include more than a few score households, even in the midst of settlements many thousands strong.

Where such networks are composed of people of similar backgrounds in two neighbouring villages, for example - the differences between them will usually be comparatively small, especially if everyone has adapted to life in Britain in very similar ways; so, even though members of rival networks may *feel* themselves to differ, their structural position in the wider social order may actually be virtually identical. But that is by no means always so. Since those of differing origins - whether by caste, class, region or previous migratory experience - brought with them varying sets of skills, goals and competences, the survival strategies which they have devised to cope with their new and largely hostile environment are by no means always identical. Quite the contrary. As it becomes increasingly obvious that settlers of differing backgrounds are following varied, and often sharply contrasting, social trajectories, so it is becoming steadily more difficult, and indeed increasingly inappropriate, to make generalisations which are valid for all 'Asians' in Britain.

How, though, can the source and significance of these variations best be explored? So great is their number, and so wide the differences in outcome - as, for instance, between wealthy East African Patidars in Leicester, and poverty-stricken Sylhetis in Tower Hamlets - that a comprehensive analysis of all dimensions of difference is way beyond the scope of a single chapter. So, to keep the number of variables to a more manageable level, I have opted, instead, for a comparative approach, restricting my attention here to just two groups: to Sikh Jullunduris on the one hand, and to Muslem Mirpuris on the other.¹

An analysis which focuses so exclusively on these two very specific groups - originating as they do in two small districts in the broad sweep of the sub-continent - might seem, at first sight, to be of very limited interest and significance. But this is most misleading; not only are at least two-thirds, and possibly as many as three-quarters of all British South Asians of Punjabi origin, but the great majority of British Punjabis can in turn trace their roots (in approximately equal numbers) either to the Jullundur Doab in India, or to Mirpur District in Azad (Pakistani-held) Kashmir (see map 10.1); indeed as many as three-quarters of British Punjabis may well be either Jullunduris or Mirpuris.² Given their very large proportional presence, together with the complex patterns of similarity and difference between them, it follows that a detailed comparative analysis is not only extremely illuminating, but of *general* significance to all those concerned with the implications of the South Asian presence in Britain.

The Punjabi presence in Britain

The similarities between Jullunduris and Mirpuris are obvious enough. Not only were the majority of migrants from both areas drawn from small peasant farming families, but they all shared - as Punjabis strong cultural, social and linguistic commonalities. But there were major differences, too. In terms of religious affiliation, Mirpuris are virtually all Moslem, while British Jullunduris are predominantly, although by no means exclusively, Sikh; more prosaically, Jullundur's local economy is, and long has been, in much better shape than Mirpur's. What relationship, though, might all this have to the equally complex patterns of similarity and difference in the trajectories which members of the two groups have followed since arrival?

Although the very earliest pioneers found their way to Britain by different routes - Jullunduris as pedlars during the 1930s (Ballard and Ballard 1977), and Mirpuris as stranded merchant seamen (Dahya 1974) - both were drawn into industrial jobs during the Second World War. Following the close of hostilities many stayed on; and it was these pioneers who, when the postwar boom and its accompanying labour shortages took off, were able to act as bridgeheads for the mass inflow which followed. To be sure, the only jobs available were those which the native English would not take, usually because they were hot, hard, heavy and relatively low-paid. But to young men from peasant farming families in both Jullundur and Mirpur they offered an opportunity to make money more quickly than had ever been possible before. So, once channels of communication were open, chain migration - where relatives called over relatives, who in turn called over *their* relatives - soon took off. Large numbers of Jullunduris and Mirpuris began to find their way to Britain.³

Migrants from both areas set out with much the same objectives: to earn and save as much money as possible as quickly as possible before returning home. Most, in fact, stayed on for much longer than they originally intended, but all encountered similar obstacles. Whatever their prior skills and qualifications, they only had access to the jobs which the white natives did not want. In struggling to establish themselves in their new environment, all faced similar structures of constraint: routine racial discrimination, the introduction of racially biased and ever more restrictive immigration laws, and finally, the collapse, in the late seventies, of the textile and heavy engineering industries in which so many of them originally came to work. Yet their responses to these experiences have differed markedly.

Patterns of family reunion

One of the most salient contradictions encountered by all longdistance labour migrants is that between the emotional imperatives of family relationships and the financial Imperatives arising from their position in the labour market. Hence, Punjabi migrants in Britain were by no means unique in finding that, although their principal aim was to improve the material welfare of their families, fulfilling that goal simultaneously cut them off from their nearest and dearest; nor in finding that, despite all the pain of separation, the temptation continually to postpone their return in order to earn and save still more was yet more powerful still. The migrants' dilemma was clear: their emotional commitment to their families stood in stark contradiction to their growing economic dependence on the British labour market.

Even though members of both groups faced the same dilemma, they coped with it in different ways. The Sikhs chose family reunion. By the late 1950s Sikh women began to join their husbands in Britain, and a few years later this became routine. So, although Sikh men continued to come to Britain in search of work until they were stopped by changes in the immigration rules in the mid-sixties, by then few waited for much longer than a year or so - during which they paid off outstanding debts and saved enough to buy and furnish a small terraced house - before calling their wives and children to join them.

By contrast, most Mirpuris opted to become international commuters. The typical pattern was for a man to work in Britain for several years before making an extended visit back home, taking his accumulated savings with him, before returning to work in Britain once again. This cycle was often repeated several times over. It was not until the early seventies that Mirpuri women began to join their husbands overseas, and only at the end of the decade did this become routine. In consequence there are, at present, substantial differences in the demographic character of the two communities. Since most Sikh families were reunited the best part of two decades ago, a British-born second generation has now reached adulthood; British-born Mirpuris are, by contrast, only just beginning to leave school.

Patterns of upward mobility

Although the Mirpuris are only just beginning to enter a terrain which has long since been occupied by the Sikhs, it is quite wrong to assume that they will necessarily follow the same social trajectory as their predecessors: indeed, the differences between them, even allowing for the delay, have now become almost as striking as the commonalities. While the majority of

Sikhs can now be described as having become broadly middle class in their lifestyles and aspirations,⁴ the Mirpuris have, as yet, been much less successful; the two groups thus currently find themselves standing in very different positions in the social order.

Most saliently, the overwhelming majority of Mirpuris continued to work in semi- and unskilled positions in heavy engineering and textiles right up to the end of the seventies. As a result they were disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of the recession of the late seventies, for it was precisely those industrial sectors in which they were overwhelmingly concentrated that were most severely hit. In the last few years well over half of all middle-aged Mirpuri men have lost their jobs, and many are still unemployed. Most Sikhs have, by contrast, survived the eighties in much better shape. While those still working in the more vulnerable industrial sectors could not escape redundancy, by the time the recession struck many had moved up into more secure and better paid jobs, often as craftsmen and technicians, in more prosperous and more buoyant sections of the labour market; meanwhile, a significant minority had opted out of waged labour completely, and started their own businesses instead.'

However, this shift towards small business and self-employment among South Asians was by no means solely a result of the recession, even though it certainly made the option more attractive. As the early pioneers had long since discovered, while Britain's white natives might routinely discriminate against them in the employment market, it was still possible to make a living - and potentially a much more profitable living in the marketplace proper. Provided that they could offer sought-after goods and services at a keen price, as well as at the right place and time, white people would buy, regardless of the colour of the seller's skin. Taking advantage of this chink in the armour of racism, many of the earliest pioneers became pedlars, selling clothes from door to door. Since then, the size and scope of Punjabi business enterprises have grown by leaps and bounds: apart from ubiquitous corner groceries, these now include taxi services and restaurants, post offices and supermarkets, as well as garages, clothing manufacturers and building contractors. And because it offers an opportunity partially to circumvent the worst effects of racial discrimination, itself made sharper by the recession, starting a business has become an increasingly attractive option.

Even though Mirpuris as well as Sikhs have opted for self-employment in ever-growing numbers, there are still marked differences between them: Sikh businesses tend to be a great deal larger, and thus much more profitable. The same is true in the housing market, where many, if not all, Sikh families have now sold - often to Mirpuri buyers - the cheap inner-city terraced houses in which they originally settled, and have moved on into suburban semis. The most successful of all are eagerly buying even more expensive detached houses in the outer suburbs. Meanwhile, in the educational sphere Sikh children's levels of academic achievement are now akin to those of the indigenous middle class (Ballard and Vellins 1984; Ballard and Driver 1979).

British Mirpuris present a very different picture. Though no less ambitious for themselves and their children than their Sikh counterparts, they have generally achieved much less in the way of occupational, residential and educational mobility, not least because the niche in the employment market on which they had come to rely collapsed at just the time when they were facing the

heavy additional expense of family reunion. Very few have been able to emulate their Sikh counterparts by moving upwards and outwards, with the result that in residential terms they are still overwhelmingly concentrated in under-resourced inner-city areas. In broad terms Mirpuris are very much more 'deprived' than Sikhs.

How are these increasingly salient differences in patterns of employment, residence and educational achievement, as well as in the speed of family reunion, best accounted for? Is it that Mirpuris are in some way more parochially minded, and hence more 'traditionalist' than their Jullundur Sikh counterparts? Or is it that these differences are better understood as a product of differences in the material conditions which they experienced prior to emigration? As I have argued elsewhere (Ballard 1983a, 1986, 1987) the latter perspective, which seeks to relate these differences to the widely differing economic and political histories of the two areas, has much to recommend it. Let me summarise.

Prosperous Jullundur ...

Economically the Jullundur Doab has a great deal going for it. Located in a fertile and easily irrigable part of the Punjab plain, its population, even in rural areas, has long enjoyed access to a well developed system of infrastructure] resources: a network of roads, railways and irrigation canals, as well as of schools and basic health care facilities, was laid down during a century of British rule. Since Independence in 1947 the infrastructure has been extended yet further, and East Punjab has become a by-word for rural prosperity. And although Sikhs who dominate Punjab socially and politically, even though they only form a bare majority of the state's population often assert that this prosperity is primarily an outcome of their own energy and entrepreneurial commitment, there is little evidence that they have a monopoly of these qualities. On the contrary, they are characteristic of *every* section of Punjab's population, regardless of religious affiliation.

Material factors provide a better foundation for the explanation of Punjab's economic growth. Thanks to relatively high agricultural prices, as well as the (post-Independence) Government of India's policy of protecting indigenous manufacturers, both Hindu and Sikh Punjabis (all Moslems in the region having fled to Pakistan) were fortunate to find themselves in an environment in which an extremely effective and profitable symbiosis between industrial and agricultural growth has taken place. Not only has Punjab become India's richest state, but Jullundur is one of its most affluent Districts. And so far, at least, it has remained so, despite the severe tensions that have been associated with the recent rise in Sikh militancy and state repression.

... and stagnating Mirpur

Mirpur has been much less fortunate. Located in an area of low hills just above the plains proper, it enjoys a higher annual rainfall than Jullundur, but is much more densely populated per cultivable acre. In the past its broken terrain provided some shelter from marauding invaders, but today that is only a hindrance. Communications are poor, and although the land is fertile, irrigation is difficult: despite its location in a bowl between the Jhelum and Poonch rivers, virtually all agriculture in Mirpur was and remains *barani* or rain-fed. Historically the District

was severely disadvantaged by its incorporation into the Maharaja of Kashmir's notoriously exploitative kingdom. Not only were his subjects more heavily taxed than their directly ruled neighbours in British India, but infrastructural investment was minimal. In 1947 there were no metalled roads, and only two high schools in the whole District; and in the war which followed (for Kashmir was disputed territory) its two most important *qasbahs* (they were hardly towns) were bombed by the Indian air force, while the small local bourgeoisie (who were overwhelmingly Sikh and Hindu) fled to India. Nor has the District fared much better since then. Nationally, Pakistan has been far less successful than India in identifying a secure path to economic growth; and the more deeply it has slipped into dependency, the more its rural economies, especially in areas of heavy overseas migration, have stagnated. To cap it all, much of Mirpur's most fertile land has disappeared beneath the waters of the Mangla Dam, a huge power and irrigation project which was completed in 1966. As in so many other such projects, the dam has brought many benefits to the people living downstream in Pakistani Punjab, while those living upstream in Mirpur have had to bear the brunt of its environmental costs.

Jullunduris and Mirpuris in Britain

Given these wide ranging differences, it is hardly surprising that Jullunduri settlers should have been more swiftly upwardly mobile than their Mirpuri counterparts. Thanks to the greater prosperity of their home villages, Jullunduris were much more likely to possess marketable craft and business skills, and also to be literate at least in Punjabi, and sometimes in English too. Indeed a small but very significant section of the Sikh inflow were college graduates. Their higher levels of skill and education have proved invaluable in the struggle to obtain better jobs while even in less well educated families the success of others in the kinship network has provided both a goal and a role model, as well as a understanding of the kind of support and encouragement that their children would need if they were to force their way upward through the educational system. But given the relative economic backwardness of Azad Kashmir, these skills and understandings were much attenuated among the first generation of Mirpuris. As a result most were content to remain in the same, largely unskilled, jobs in heavy engineering and textiles in which they first began.

For many years this was a far from unreasonable strategy. Basic wages were low, but those prepared to work long hours of overtime could still earn a reasonable income. However, the massive industrial recession of the early 1980s changed all that, for this niche in the employment market virtually disappeared. Unemployment rates soared, so that it was soon more common for middle-aged Mirpuri men to be out of work than in it. Given the scarcity of new jobs, let alone their poor command of English and routine discrimination, their chances of finding another job have remained disappointingly small.

In the wake of such experiences, it is scarcely surprising that Mirpuris are a great deal more socially disadvantaged than the Sikhs. Not only are they still overwhelmingly concentrated in those parts of the country which provided the largest and longest-lasting demand for unskilled labour, such as Birmingham, Sheffield and the textile towns on both sides of the Pennines; within those areas they are yet further concentrated in inner-city areas, and very often in those where, thanks both to the scale of their presence and to the extent of white flight, they now dominate both physically and numerically. Membership of these residential concentrations most certainly

brings some benefits for there is safety in numbers, while the very density of settlement promotes the establishment of particularly strong communal networks. But there are disadvantages too. Not only is the quality of public services invariably inferior to those in the more suburban areas to which most Sikhs have now shifted, but the very poverty of most Mirpuris families makes it impossible for them to contemplate making a similar move upwards and outwards.

These residential concentrations - which are particularly marked in the textile towns on both sides of the Pennines - have all sorts of consequences, and not least in linguistic terms. Although most Sikh parents are keen that their children should be reasonably fluent in Punjabi, their residential circumstances are such that their children are invariably in routine contact with English-speaking children. Most Sikh children are therefore more fluent in English than Punjabi. Not so Mirpuri children. If, as is very often the case, they live in a neighbourhood which is exclusively Asian, if their parents speak little or no English, and if the schools which they attend are again dominated by Punjabi speakers like themselves, they will have very few opportunities to acquire fluent English from face-to-face contact with fluent English speakers. No wonder, then, that the many Mirpuri (and Bangladeshi) children who grow up in such circumstances, and who receive little or no relevant educational assistance to enhance their linguistic competence, tend to fare much less well in examinations than do their Sikh counterparts.

Although the generally poor and relatively unsophisticated Mirpuris have consequently gained a reputation for 'backwardness' amongst their fellow South Asian settlers, and although some outside observers are also beginning to reach the same conclusion, it must be emphasised that these differences are no way innate. It is not that Mirpuris have any less of an appetite, or a capacity, for upward mobility than the Sikhs: it is their starting points which differ. Consequently, by far the simplest and most plausible way of explaining most aspects of currently observable differences between Jullunduris and Mirpuris is that they are an outcome of the strikingly different histories and political economies of their home bases. Yet however useful and necessary it may be to begin with such a perspective, the time has come to insist that it does not provide a *sufficient* basis for understanding all dimensions of difference. Specifically, such materialist arguments cannot explain why Mirpuris - in common with most other Moslems - should have taken so much longer to reunite their families than did Sikhs and Hindus; nor why Mirpuris - again in common with most other Moslems - tend to sustain much tighter and more inward-looking social networks, even in the diaspora, than do Sikhs or Hindus.

Could cultural - and, more specifically, religious - variables be a partial determinant of such differences? It is, after all, quite frequently asserted that Islam is more 'authoritarian', and less 'open-minded', than either Hinduism or Sikhism; and there clearly *is* a correlation between patterns of family and community Organisation on the one hand, and religion on the other. Could the relationship be causal? It is an argument that I find myself approaching with great caution, for the dangers are clear. Any explanation which rests on sweeping, and inevitably stereotypical, assertions about the allegedly 'conservative' or 'liberal' character of the two religious traditions must be rejected as unhelpful and unilluminating. Nevertheless, I have become increasingly convinced that there *are* some very significant issues at stake here, which are indeed broadly associated with religion; however, if the analysis is to have any validity, and stereotypes are to be avoided, all arguments must show, in a very specific way, just *how*

difference has been precipitated. With this in mind it is worth exploring the implications of three very specific areas of difference:

- (i) *In marriage rules:* while Sikhs, like Hindus, are barred from marrying their close kin, Moslems are permitted, and indeed encouraged to do so.
- (ii) *In gender rules:* given the conventions of *purdah*, Moslem women's public mobility is much more tightly restricted than is the case among Sikhs and Hindus.
- (iii) *In mortuary rites:* while Moslems bury their dead, Sikhs, like Hindus, opt for cremation.

Esoteric though these differences may seem, they have had, I would argue, a very substantial differential impact on both the character of kinship structures in Punjab and on processes of overseas migration.

Kinship and marriage in Punjab

We must begin, though, by getting to grips with the character of the broad arena within which these differences occur. All Punjabis Hindu, Sikh and Moslem - follow much the same basic kinship conventions, in which patrilineal descent and patri-virilocal residence are the guiding principles. Each family (*ghar*) - which ideally includes a man, his sons, and his sons' sons, together with their wives and unmarried daughters - is a strongly corporate group, whose members are expected to live cooperatively together under the same roof while jointly exploiting their common assets and property. As well as being the arena within which the most intense personal relationships are sustained, such units also provide the basic building blocks for the local social structure. It is above all as members of their families, rather than as lone individuals, that Punjabis participate in the wider world.

While relationships within the family are both more demanding, and more supportive, than all others, they by no means exhaust the universe of kinship. Within each caste (*zat*) and descent group (variously *got*, *qom*, *patti*, *biraderi* or *tabbar*) families are linked by an equally complex, although less overwhelmingly binding, network of extra-familial kinship ties: and it is in this extra-familial sphere that differences in marriage rules have a decisive impact.

Agnates and affines

In Punjab extra-familial kin are conceptually divided into two categories: agnates members of families with whom one shares common patrilineal descent; and affines - those with whom a relationship has been established by marriage. Each set of relationships has its own distinctive character. Since residence is normally patri-virilocal, neighbours usually belong to the same descent group. But, although such brothers, whether real or classificatory, expect to sustain a strong sense of mutual loyalty, their relationship always has a strongly competitive edge, for they are simultaneously allies and rivals. Ties of affinity, by contrast, are socially and physically more distant, and also firmly non-reciprocal. In Punjab as elsewhere in Northern India, bride-givers stand in a position of social inferiority to bride-receivers. But, in the absence of the competitive

undercurrent which is so characteristic of agnatic ties, affinal links provide a neat counterpoint to those of descent, for men invariably maintain particularly close and affectionate ties with their sisters, and through them with her children: relationships between mothers' brothers and their sisters' sons are thus uniquely close.

Marriage rules

Up to this point the conventions of family and kinship organisation used by Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs are virtually identical: where they differ radically, however, is with respect to marriage rules. While both Hindus and Sikhs expect marriage to be caste-endogamous (i.e., one must marry into one's own caste), they also follow equally strict rules of exogamy. Marriage into one's father's, mother's, father's mother's and mother's mother's *got* (clan or descent group) is generally prohibited, as is the exchange of women between two families. Since all members of the same caste in any given village usually belong to the same *got*, it follows that brides must expect to move from one village to another when they go to join their husbands, and that they will normally have no prior ties of kinship with either their mother-in-law or their sisters-in-law. Conversion to Islam has, however, had a dramatic impact on the structure of these networks, for in Moslem law, marriage is restricted only by the incest taboo: this excludes only immediate consanguines - parents, siblings, and parents' siblings - as potential spouses. And following a practice which is widespread in the Islamic world, many Punjabi Moslems have not only abandoned the principle of clan exogamy, but adopted an *active preference* for marriage with cousins. Just why conversion should have precipitated such a radical change in marriage strategies is most unclear. One common suggestion is that it is a tactical response to the Islamic law of inheritance, which makes daughters heirs as well as sons: by routinely marrying patrilineal cousins, men can ensure that property does not slip beyond control of the descent group. But plausible though this may seem in principle, it is in fact virtually unheard of for Moslem women even to try to claim their share of the patrimony - whoever they may have married. In Mirpur, as in most of the rest of Pakistan, what seems to be far more important is that the absence of the necessity for exogamy has reinforced the strength of sibling ties. Brothers and sisters now *expect to* be given right of first refusal in offers of marriage for each others' children, so much so that the rejection causes great offence: it is often regarded as a repudiation of the obligations of siblingship itself.

This does not mean that Mirpuri marriages are *always* arranged between close kin. Spouses of the right age and sex may not be available, and even if they are, acute conflicts between siblings can lead to such obligations being deliberately, if temporarily, repudiated. Moreover, most families find it strategically advantageous to make at least *some* external marriage alliances. Nevertheless my observations suggest that well over half of all marriages in Mirpur are contracted between first cousins, and that even when matches are arranged with non-relatives, they are rarely left in isolation. When followed up by further matches, two previously unconnected families can soon find themselves bound together in a single network.

This has many consequences. Because of the high level of *biraderi* endogamy, kinship networks in Mirpur are much less geographically extensive than those of the Jullunduri Sikhs; and although the conceptual distinction between agnates and affines has not been abandoned, most *hiraderi* members are related to each other several times over by entirely different routes.

Relationships within such networks are consequently far more in-turned and all-embracing than in those where exogamy is the rule. For men, the loyalties and obligations of agnation are supplemented and reinforced by those of affinity, while for women the whole experience of marriage is fundamentally transformed. Rarely does a bride join a household of strangers: more often than not either her mother-in-law and/or her sisters-in-law are already closely related to her.

This, I will argue, has had a major impact on processes of migration to Britain; but before considering how, we must explore the two other major dimensions of difference.

Purdah

In the domestic domain, all Punjabis - Hindu, Sikh and Moslem employ broadly similar patterns of gender expectations. While women are expected to behave with circumspection when men are present - and so, for example, to keep their faces well covered with a *chuni* (headscarf) in the presence of their husbands' elder male kin they are by no means wholly withdrawn from the productive process, at least in peasant farming families. Women perform a wide range of domestic tasks which, although largely performed in and around the house and its courtyard, by no means confine them wholly to those limits. On the contrary they regularly move about the village to fetch water, wash clothes, feed animals, and especially during the busiest periods in the agricultural cycle - to work in the fields.

However, specifically Moslem rules of *purdah* (which are, in fact, followed with particular strictness in Mirpur) have a dramatic impact on women's behaviour in the public domain. Adult women, with the partial exception of those who have long since passed the menopause, are expected to avoid all public places, including the bazaar. As a result all shopping in Mirpur is normally done by men, except when itinerant pedlars of whom there are many - come directly to the courtyard. When women travel beyond the confines of the villages - to visit kin or a shrine, for example - they are particularly circumspect. In the past they usually wrapped themselves in a *cheddar* (a large shawl), but it is now more fashionable, and more prestigious, to wear a *burka*, a light but longsleeved coat, from whose hood two panels of fine material can be pulled down to completely cover the face. Women's spatial mobility is thus tightly restricted, as is their involvement in public events.

Although the use of *the burka* by women travelling outside their immediate home neighbourhood - among whose inhabitants such strict *purdah* is not kept - is a relatively novel phenomenon in Mirpur, its adoption, which implies an increase in the level of seclusion to which women are subjected, reflects an important current in the contemporary Pakistani social order. Not only is the seclusion of women regarded as prestigious, at least in peasant families aspiring to join the lower middle class, but it is a practice which receives constant ideological reinforcement from both state and mosque. The contrast with Jullundur could hardly be sharper. In India both the state and the educational system have a strongly secular emphasis. And although gender is still marked - so wearing a *chuni* remains a mark of respectability - restrictions on women's mobility are far less severe. While the prospect of a respectable young woman travelling a long distance alone in India might still cause some concern, no-one would

suggest that women should not go to the bazaar alone, nor that it might be socially demeaning for them to take up paid employment.

Funeral rites

The final issue whose implications we must explore is that of funeral rites; for while Moslems bury the dead, the Sikhs, like the Hindus, cremate. While these practices reflect the differing perspectives on the afterlife adopted by each faith, it is not their theological underpinnings, but rather their practical consequences that I want to highlight here. The point is simple: while cremation leaves no physical memorial, burial does. Why, though, should this matter?

A striking aspect of the rural scene in Mirpur is the way in which each little *biraderi* has its own carefully tended graveyard, in which everyone gradually reassembles after death. And although Islam allows no cult of the ancestors, the graveyard itself not only provides a strong physical expression of *the biraderi's* corporate character, but gives it a very strong sense of rootedness. Hence when deaths occur in Britain as is now becoming increasingly frequent - most families go to great and very expensive lengths to fly the body back to Pakistan for an appropriately located burial. By contrast, location exerts no pressure on either Sikhs or Hindus, for cremation, which should take place within twenty-four hours, can be carried out anywhere. And although the ashes should ideally be subsequently scattered in the sacred river Ganges, other rivers can serve as substitutes. So although many British Hindus, and at least some Sikhs, still take their elders' ashes back to Hardwar or Benares, a local river - the Thames is much favoured - can be used instead. Cremation does not generate ties to a particular locality, as burial does for Moslems.

Taken in isolation, this difference would be trivial; where it gains significance, however, is from its place in a more general pattern, for these otherwise disparate differences in marriage rules, *pardah*, and mortuary rites all reinforce the same tendency. Thanks to their combined impact, Moslem kinship networks tend not only to be much more tightly knit than those of Sikhs and Hindus, but also to have a much stronger local focus, as well as inhibiting the physical mobility of Moslem women. This greater degree of tight-knittedness has, in turn, greatly affected patterns of migration to and settlement in Britain.

Kinship, migration and settlement

Settlement in Britain has, of course, been strongly mediated by kinship. Not only did virtually all migrants set off with the support and encouragement of their extended families - for it was they who usually financed the cost of a ticket and passport - but only the very earliest pioneers lacked prior contacts overseas. Thereafter everyone joined kinsmen and acquaintances who were already established overseas. Thus despite their location thousands of miles from home, most migrants continued to live and work alongside their kinsmen and fellow villagers. Nor did emigration necessarily undermine the structure of the extended family. Taking a well-paid job abroad was not just seen as bringing personal benefits: on the contrary, those who did so were perceived, and perceived themselves, as fulfilling their most basic obligation as a family member - to make the maximum possible contribution to the collective resources of the group.

However, even though there was no question about migrants' continued family membership, their very initiative soon began to precipitate all sorts of tensions and contradictions. Migrants, for example, often felt that while those who stayed at home reaped an immediate benefit from their remittances, they often failed to appreciate how much hardship had been faced in generating them. And although sending money home gave migrants great satisfaction, most also felt that they should, given their greatly enhanced contribution to the group's collective resources, have a larger voice in family affairs, despite their youth and formal juniority. But if, thanks to these changes in the balance of power, those who stayed behind soon began both to fear and to half-expect such challenges to their authority, they were far from lacking resources with which to contest them. It was they who still controlled the family's patrimonial resources, and especially its land; moreover, migrants' wives and children were effectively in their custody.

Nor was it just in this sphere that contradictions arose, for the longer they stayed abroad, the more migrants began to miss regular contact with their wives and children; I was told many poignant stories about children being unable to recognise their fathers on their return from lengthy spells of work abroad. On the other hand, few wished to abandon the material advantages that arose from working in Britain. How were the contradictions to be resolved? For migrants to bring their wives and children to join them was an obvious option, for it reduced tensions in the domestic and conjugal sphere, even if it also tended to exacerbate those within the 'der extended family. Indeed such reunions could seem to threaten its very existence.

Processes of dissidence within Punjabi families

Although founded on expectations of unlimited reciprocity and solidarity, all Punjabi extended families, at home, no less than in the diaspora, are also riven by internal tensions. As we have already noted, siblingship contains its own contradictions, for brothers are at once the closest of allies and the most bitter of rivals; and these contradictions are further exacerbated by marriage. Not only do in-marrying wives, especially if unrelated, have their own separate interests, but the more brothers, as husbands, become emotionally committed to their own wives and children, the more the principle of agnatic solidarity will be challenged.

This contradiction is incorporated into the very rituals of marriage itself, no less amongst Moslems than Sikhs and Hindus. Overtly, the ideal of jointness is both emphasised and much celebrated: it is into her in-laws' household, of which her husband is but a junior member, that the bride is formally incorporated. Yet at the same time the bride's all-important dowry quietly provides a symbolic counterpoint. Besides her personal jewellery, a dowry should include everything - beds, bedding, furniture and a complete range of household utensils - which the bride and her husband would need to establish their own independent household. For although the prospect of partition receives no public stress, the possibility of its occurrence is no secret. Indeed, once couples have established themselves economically, and have been blessed with the offspring needed to secure their future, it has long been commonplace even in the most 'traditional' of rural contexts - for a gradual process of domestic separation to take place, even if a formal division of family property rarely occurs before the patriarch's death (Kessinger 1975).

For a conjugal pair to seek greater autonomy within the joint family by partially separating themselves from it is not, therefore, an unusual or unexpected event: such developments however much they may be opposed by its remaining members are routine. Nevertheless the dynamics of that process differ substantially as between Moslems on the one hand and Sikhs and Hindus on the other. Where wives have no prior ties of kinship, they can only be expected to have a very limited interest in the maintenance of jointness; and again because of their unrelatedness, each also provides her husband with his own unique network of affinal kin. Thus when brothers (or even fathers and sons) fall out, each has access to at least some degree of support and encouragement from an external ally. By contrast, the close interweaving of agnatic and affinal links found in most Moslem *biraderis* leaves men with much less in the way of individuating support; meanwhile, if mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and daughters-in-law are kin, they may well have *their* own reasons for staying together. So even though most conjugal couples do eventually seek a greater degree of autonomy for themselves, moves in that direction tend to proceed a good deal more slowly amongst Moslems than Sikhs.

Doubts and uncertainties

Thus while men who called their wives and children to join them in Britain may, in so doing, have undermined the residential unity of the extended family, they were not doing anything new. Similar developments might well have occurred had everyone stayed back in Punjab, and in any case they developed along an established fault-line within the family structure. Nevertheless many settlers have very mixed feelings about the consequences of making such a move. Clear though the emotional benefits might be, most were equally conscious of the possible costs. Since it was far more expensive to maintain a family in Britain, their propensity to save, and to remit, dropped sharply; their dreams of going home for good were thus pushed yet further into abeyance. Dangers were also perceived to be lurking in other spheres for, impressed though they were by Britain's material prosperity, most Punjabi migrants' evaluation of the *moral* quality of native British lifestyles was quite the reverse. Indeed it was precisely in order to protect their families from what they perceived as the 'corrupting' influence of English ways that many of the early settlers concluded that for safety's sake their wives and children were best left at home. 8

But widespread though these fears may have been at the outset, once ethnic colonies became larger and more secure, so generating a social arena within which a Punjabi moral order could be reproduced, doubts began to fade. Led by the Sikhs and Hindus, Punjabi settlers gradually began to feel that it was both safe and sensible to bring their wives and children to join them in Britain.

The collapse of inter-continental commuting

While the Mirpuris eventually reached the same conclusion, they were a great deal more cautious: it took them the best part of fifteen years to change their minds. Thus from the late fifties right up till the early seventies most Mirpuris became international commuters. Travel was expensive, and so was not undertaken lightly: most men worked in Britain for anything between one and four years, and then went home for a period that might last just as long. Besides enjoying a well-earned rest, they spent their time investing in such projects as building

new houses, buying more land, digging wells and planting orchards, or celebrating their own, or their sisters' or their daughters' marriages. Many also awaited the successful conclusion of their wife's next pregnancy before returning to the industrial treadmill. During this period Britain was, in effect, little more than an income producing way-station; it was not, for them, their domicile.

During the seventies, however, this strategy became increasingly difficult to sustain. Before the recession set in, when most mills and foundries were chronically short of labour, extended leave of absence had been easy to negotiate. But as levels of unemployment rose this ceased. Not only did those who absented themselves for lengthy periods find it impossible to get their old jobs back, but new ones were virtually unavailable. International commuting was, in other words, no longer a viable option. Yet if family reunion thereby became much more attractive, it was, by the late seventies, a much more difficult move to implement, thanks largely to the impact of Britain's ever-tightening immigration laws.

The impact of immigration control

Although the principal object of two decades of changes in the immigration rules has been to reduce the number of non-European settlers to the lowest possible level, their impact on processes of chain migration has often produced paradoxical outcomes. So, for example, while the 1962 Immigration Act curtailed Commonwealth citizens' previously automatic right of entry by insisting that settlers must first obtain employment vouchers, it hardly curbed the volume of inflow. Since the demand for additional labour, especially in heavy engineering and textiles, was still acute, many Punjabis, only too aware that the window of opportunity might soon close, obtained as many vouchers as they could for their kinsmen back home. The scheme may or may not have reduced the total inflow, but it most certainly greatly reinforced the process of chain migration.

Subsequent measures have had a similar effect. Following the withdrawal of the voucher scheme in 1965, it became extremely difficult for men from the sub-continent to come to Britain to work. Yet there was still a demand for their labour, and at comparatively high wages: for enterprising young men in Jullundur and Mirpur, the British labour market remained as attractive as ever. But how could they take advantage of the opportunity? Other than illegal entry, only two routes were available: either boys on the verge of adulthood could be brought in as dependents provided that their fathers had already established residence rights in Britain; or alternatively, young men could marry girls whose parents had already taken them to Britain, and gain entry as their husbands.

Jullundur and Mirpur have, however, followed rather different courses through the thickets of immigration control, largely because of their differing strategies of family reunion. Jullundur, since they started earlier, ran into fewer obstacles. When they began to appear at Heathrow with their families - as they did in rapidly increasing numbers from the early sixties onwards - they encountered few problems. Until the early seventies, by which time most Sikhs had already reunited their families, it was adult male 'primary immigrants', rather than established settlers' dependents, who were the principal targets of immigration control. Hence wives and

children were usually allowed to enter after answering a few straightforward questions. Since then, however, much has changed. Although all Commonwealth citizens who have gained a right of abode in Britain still have the same right, at least in principle, to reunite their families, the seventies and eighties have witnessed the introduction of an ever larger battery of administrative obstacles, aimed, quite deliberately, at minimising the number doing so. This has led to the development of a complex game of cat and mouse between the immigration authorities and potential settlers.

In the late sixties, for example, an increasing number of Mirpuri men began, following one of their periodic trips home, to bring their fourteen and fifteen-year-old sons back with them to Britain. Young enough to be permitted to enter as dependents and thus avoiding the bar on adult males - it would not be long before they left school and started work. But, seeing this as a 'loophole' which should be closed, immigration officers began to insist that if dependents were to enter, the whole family must come. One way round that was, of course, to bring everyone over, and then to send one's wife and daughters back to Pakistan again after a brief visit to Britain. Despite the very considerable cost a few men did just that; but for many more these developments simply provided yet another impetus towards a change in strategy. Not only were the family contradictions outlined earlier sharpening around them, but inter-continental commuting was becoming ever more difficult in practice. Even though changes in the immigration rules may only have been a contributory factor, they provided Mirpuris with yet another incentive to switch their domestic domicile to Britain.

By the late seventies, family reunion had indeed become the goal of most British Mirpuris; but by then the goalposts had been shifted once again. Though their rights of entry were, in principle, unchanged, entry certificates had become increasingly hard to get. Families were forced to wait (and often still have to wait) for a year or more before getting their first interview, or more accurately, undergoing their first interrogation. Husbands and wives (and any other available family members) are questioned separately, and must convince the Entry Certificate Officer that they are indeed the persons they claim to be, that they are legally married, that each of the children they claim as theirs is indeed the child of that marriage. They must also satisfactorily explain any discrepancies between their verbal statements, the extensive documentation that they are required to present, and the evidence of 'linked files' - the records of previous interrogations carried out when other members of their families applied to go to Britain. Faced with this obstacle course, in which confusion is compounded by the immense linguistic and conceptual gulf between English bureaucrats and Punjabi villagers, applications can take years to process. And despite expensive reapplications and appeals, many have found themselves unjustly, but quite deliberately, excluded (Commission for Racial Equality 1985).

The maintenance of roots in Mirpur

In analysing the process of family reunion, however, it is not sufficient simply to set the prospective material and social advantages of reunions against the obstacles - primarily arising from immigration control - which stand in the way of their fulfilment. What must also be explored is the positive attraction of maintaining roots back home. Why then, did Mirpuris continue to make so many return visits, continue to remit such a substantial proportion of their

earnings, and continue to invest so much in extending and embellishing their houses back home, even though they were becoming ever more tightly bound into the British employment market?

In the first place the simple pleasures of returning to a place where the climate is warm, vegetables fresh, one's friends and family are all around and where life is easygoing - in marked contrast to the pressures, hostilities and sheer barrenness of life in inner-urban Britain - should never be underestimated. But there were many other factors too. Given the nature of Punjabi society, competition for *izzat* (honour) was inevitably of critical importance, for as long as some people kept returning to extend their houses, and to equip them with televisions and refrigerators, for example, all their neighbours, and especially their fellow kinsmen, found themselves under pressure to do the same if loss of face was to be avoided. But since considerations of this kind apply with just as much force to Sikhs as to Moslems, we need to identify a further dimension to explain delays in family reunion, and in my view differences in the structure of kinship networks provide the most plausible answer.

As suggested earlier, the very structure of the family itself generates a contradiction between the interests of young men working overseas and the elders who stayed at home: the more the former could be locked into making repeated visits back home, the longer the latter could take advantage of the continued arrival of remittances, while still sustaining their position of dominance. Moreover, the opportunities for doing so were a good deal more extensive where close kin marriage was practised. Various strategies were available. For unmarried sons, delay was a powerful constraint, since it was only when parents arranged the ceremony that the usually long since agreed upon marriage could actually take place. In these circumstances it was easy to insist that financing the celebrations to the appropriate degree of splendour required yet another spell of work abroad.

Even when marriage did take place, it often proved much more difficult for Mirpuri men to successfully challenge the conventions of co-residence, and thus to bring their wives to Britain. Quite apart from Moslem conventions of *pardah*, which could be used to oppose the swift removal of a bride overseas, Mirpuri women themselves tended to be much less interested in making such a move. Unlike their Sikh counterparts, who, thanks to the rules of exogamy, are thrust by marriage into the company of strangers, most Mirpuri brides are already related to their new affinal kin. Failing that, other kinswomen invariably live nearby. Not only do they have much less of an immediate interest in achieving greater domestic autonomy; on the contrary, they may well positively welcome the prospect of staying put.

Thus, despite the many similarities in the basic cultural premises used by both Jullunduris and Mirpuris, a whole series of minor differences of cousin marriage and the consequent construction of kinship networks containing fewer ready-made cleavages, of the tighter limits on women's spacial mobility imposed by the rules of *pardah*, and of necessarily unshiftable family graveyards which provide a physical focus for the *biraderi* - have served to tie Mirpuris much more firmly than Jullunduris to their localities of origin. It is in terms of these considerations, alongside the changing character of the British labour market and the increasingly restrictive impact of the immigration rules, that Mirpuris' relatively slow rate of family reunion is best understood.

Differing trajectories in the post-migratory period

Even though the great majority of Mirpuris have now, at long last, managed to reunite their families in Britain, they are by no means following identical social trajectories to those of their Jullunduri predecessors. And although, as suggested earlier, many aspects of those differences can be attributed to the relative lack of economic development in Mirpur, as well as the much more restricted set of opportunities currently available in Britain's recession-ridden economy, by no means everything can be so explained.

Two issues are worth noting as we pass: first in terms of employment, where Moslem women's participation in the formal labour market has, thus far at least, been much more limited than that of their Sikh and Hindu counterparts. The reasons are not hard to identify: given their stronger commitment to seclusion, Moslem women - and most especially those born and brought up in rural Pakistan - have been exceedingly reluctant to take up jobs outside their homes. However they are very far from being economically inactive, for since the recession has rendered so many of their husbands unemployed, the great majority now do out-work at home. Technically self-employed (and so overlooked in most surveys of economic activity), they receive minimal wages for long hours of work in atrocious conditions; but for many, these earnings now provide a crucial supplement to their family income (Mitter 1986).

A second very significant difference is in fertility levels, which, thus far at least, are much higher among Moslems than Sikhs (Ballard 1983b). This, once again, has a religious foundation. In general, Sikhs are unworried about using contraceptives. By contrast, popular Islam not only tends to promote rather stronger reservations about the legitimacy of human intervention in the God-given blessing of fertility, but Moslem rules of seclusion also tend to make it more difficult for women to gain access to family planning services. That said, it is not the case that these differences will necessarily be permanent. Most young British-born Mirpuri women now look forward to earning incomes of their own, and like their Sikh counterparts, are much more determined to limit their fertility.

Important though the social effects of employment and fertility may be, marriage patterns - especially when there is an option of marrying overseas - can have an even more enduring impact; and here, once again, the two groups have followed strikingly different courses.

The Sikhs' post-settlement marriage strategies

Given the rule of exogamy, Sikh parents have no prior obligation to make or accept any particular offer of *riste* (marriage); since every match is arranged from scratch, the choice for each child is open. At the beginning of the settlement process most British-based Sikhs continued, when it came to finding spouses for their offspring, to follow the strategies which they would have employed had they stayed at home: matches were arranged into families living in villages near to their own. Although this was not their primary purpose, such practices had the effect of yet further increasing the volume of immigration. Not only did Punjab-based brides, following tradition, invariably come to join their husbands' families in Britain, but in the inverse case, where British-based girls married Punjabi boys, their husbands almost always took

advantage of the opportunity to shift their residence to Britain too. But with the passage of time, preferences have changed. Amongst British Sikhs, locally arranged marriages have now become the norm.

That change has, however, by no means been straightforward. For a long time it was widely felt that girls brought up in Britain were likely, thanks to their contact with English ways, to prove less dutiful and obedient as daughters-in-law than those who had been brought up in Punjab. Hence parents frequently favoured the latter over the former. And precisely because of this tendency - reinforced by the 'leakage' of potential grooms precipitated by the much greater propensity of Sikh boys to throw over the traces by establishing relationships with English girls British Sikhs with daughters on their hands have found themselves in an increasingly competitive marriage market. In the absence of a large and tempting dowry, good locally based grooms were often hard to find. But getting a groom from Punjab was much easier - since such matches offered the opportunity of settlement in Britain, they seemed most attractive to both young men and their parents.

Nevertheless, there has been a growing realisation on all sides that such matches tend to be much more conflict ridden than most. Many, though not all, British-bred girls were disturbed, to say the least, by the prospect of trying to establish relationships with men whom they felt were unsophisticated and rustic; meanwhile those same men were equally unhappy about the apparent 'forwardness' of their wives. In the inverse case, where it was the bride rather than the groom who was brought from India, problems of compatibility tended to be less severe: the conventional hierarchy of gender was less directly threatened. Even so, most Sikh boys have now joined their sisters in regarding such matches with disfavour. So despite the frequent receipt of offers of *riste from* India, which some parents - and especially those having difficulty in finding suitable matches for their daughters may be tempted to accept, their children invariably strongly oppose them. And in doing so, young Sikhs have the advantage of knowing that their parents are under no prior obligation to accept any given offer. Hence the vast majority of Sikh marriages are either locally arranged, or at least contracted elsewhere in the overseas Sikh diaspora.

Mirpuris' post-migration marriage strategies

Amongst the Mirpuris, however, marriages with Pakistan-based partners remain much more frequent, for even though they have proved as tension-prone as those amongst the Sikhs, parents find themselves under much more intense pressure to accept offers of *of riste* from their Mirpurbased kin. It is not hard to see why. When it comes to arranging their children's marriages, those Mirpuris with British-resident siblings - and so large has the scale of emigration been that very few are not in that position - invariably seek to remind their relatives of their familial responsibilities. Not only are their British-resident nephews and nieces precisely those to whom they would have expected to marry their children in the absence of emigration, but they also feel that the advantages which accrue from residence in Britain redouble their kinsmen's obligations in this sphere. Those lucky enough to have made it ought, as a matter of principle, to do everything in their power to share their blessings with their less fortunate kin. Many British Mirpuris often find these pressures and expectations hard to resist. Over and above their

genuine feelings of loyalty to and affection for their now-distant kin, they are very conscious that a persistent rejection of all offers of *riste* will inevitably be perceived by those at home as mean, unjustified and unnecessary; and that having been so put down, their slighted kinsfolk may well take every opportunity to blacken their name - a major sanction in a society where *izzat* is so crucial.

Yet although the majority of British Mirpuri marriages are still *biraderi* endogamous, it does not follow that all such marriages involve Pakistan-based partners; many are arranged between British-resident couples. Nevertheless although many younger British Mirpuris have now grown almost as doubtful about the viability of matches with spouses from back home as have their Sikh counterparts, their parents often find their hands are much more closely tied, feeling duty-bound to consider offers of *riste* from Pakistan-based *biraderi* members just as seriously as those proposed by local residents. In consequence the incidence of trans-continental marriage is not only much higher amongst Mirpuris than Jullunduris, but seems likely to remain so for quite some time to come, despite all the obstacles which have now been introduced by the immigration authorities.

The continuing importance of trans-continental links

Standing back for a moment to take a broader view, it should by now be clear why the increasingly popular demand - at least among members of the white majority - that all further (non-European) immigration should be halted is proving so difficult to achieve. However draconian the curbs on further movement that may be introduced, migrants - and especially those as heavily involved in their kinship networks as are South Asians - will be strongly committed to maintaining links with other members of their community, wherever they may live. Marriage and family reunion are only the most obvious ways in which such trans-continental links are sustained, for the underlying ties of interest, affection, obligation and loyalty are also manifested in a wide variety of other ways: letters, message-filled audio- and video-cassettes as well as telephone calls stream back and forth, while visits, again in both directions, are much looked forward to.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that migration is not, and cannot be made to be, a single time-limited event: rather it creates a series of umbilical links between geographically separated communities. Having recognised this, the issue most worthy of exploration is not so much the continued existence of such links, but their dynamics, for if ties of interest and affection keep drawing people together, economic and political obstacles, wherever they occur, keep driving them apart. How then can British South Asians' ties with their homelands best be characterised? Once again we find some major differences.

In Mirpur ...

While most Mirpuris still maintain close links with their home villages, the character of those links is slowly changing. So, for example, while visits back home are still made almost as frequently as ever, since lengthy stays are no longer a viable option for wage-earners, brief emergency visits, precipitated by accident, illness or death have become more commonplace.

In recent years, however, a new development has emerged. Faced, during the early eighties, with recession, redundancy, and the prospect of long-term unemployment, the prospect of going home for good became increasingly attractive to many middle-aged Mirpuris. Having sold their houses to realise all their available capital, such returnees hoped to invest their savings in a profitable business back home. A few have indeed managed to do so with great success; but the experience of most has been very different. Given the stagnation of Mirpur's rural economy, together with their lack of the all important connections with the administrative and political elite, the great majority of returnees have not been able to find a secure and profitable home for their savings. They have been forced, instead, to live on their capital. Many have now exhausted their savings, only to be confronted with the uncomfortable realisation that the best available option is to return, now penniless and homeless, to the bottom of the ladder in Britain.⁹

A few returnees do better, most notably those whose links with Britain, in the form of a pension, for example, give them a secure income. What is clear, however, is that although the Mirpuris have invested a great deal, no less in emotional than in financial terms, in maintaining links with their home villages, the stagnation of the rural economy has, through no fault of their own, largely vitiated their efforts to sustain a physical base there.

... and in Jullundur

The Sikhs, by contrast, face a very different set of options. In principle Jullundur, with its thriving local economy, is a much more attractive proposition for potential returnees, and in the early eighties there was indeed the beginnings of a return. But that has now ceased, and instead many families are only too keen to liquidate their investments in Punjab. The reasons are not hard to identify. Since 'Operation Bluestar' in 1984, when the Indian Army took the Golden Temple in Amritsar by force, life in Punjab has become increasingly insecure: violence is now commonplace and social polarisation vicious. Worse still many government officials tend to identify Sikhs, and most especially overseas Sikhs, as potentially seditious. Even obtaining a visa to visit Punjab was made very difficult. Given that overseas Sikhs now widely (if erroneously) perceive Punjab as being subject to enemy occupation, it is hardly surprising that very few now seek to return for anything more than the briefest of visits. This is unlikely to change until and unless current tensions are resolved.

Global connections

It is also worth emphasising that where migrant groups have established a multiplicity of beach-heads overseas, those considering moving on are often able to explore a much wider set of options than the simple polar choice between staying put and going back. The Sikhs, for example, now work within a global diaspora. Thus while well educated and professionally qualified young Sikhs who have grown disillusioned by the lack of opportunities in racist and industrially declining Britain may have little interest, at least at present, in going back to Punjab or in joining their relatives who have settled in Southeast Asia and East Africa, the opportunities available in Canada and the United States, where well established Sikh communities are also to

be found, are much more attractive. In consequence a great deal of re-emigration across the Atlantic is currently taking place.

The Mirpuris once again present a contrast, for although they too have established a diaspora, it is much less extensive. Few have yet found their way to North America, although they do have a significant presence in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, as well as in Scandinavia and West Germany. But they, too, are taking advantage of those connections. Given the higher wages and lower levels of unemployment, even for those with the most basic skills, now found in continental Europe, many Mirpuris are now taking advantage of EEC regulations to get there.

Conclusion: South Asian differentiation in Britain

International migration is therefore a much more complex process than is often supposed. Rarely does it entail a simple bilateral movement from one country to another, for not only do those caught up in migrant diasporas tend to have a very comprehensive knowledge of the range of opportunities available in the global labour market, but their kinship networks greatly facilitate their ability to take advantage of those opportunities. Nor is migration a one-off population transfer of a kind that might have, or be brought to, a finite and clearly delineated end. Rather, it sets in train an on-going *process*, in which members of a multiplicity of geographically separated but socially interlinked communities use and indeed continually readjust all the resources - human and cultural no less than material - available to them, both to advance their interests, and to circumvent any obstacles they encounter.

Once viewed in such dialectic terms, it follows that as a result of variations in their deployable resources, it is only to be expected that those of differing origins will follow different trajectories. Hence my approach in this chapter, where I have sought to show how a specific set of politico-economic differences on the one hand, together with an equally specific set of religio-cultural differences on the other, have interacted with the changes in the state of the British labour market as well as in the immigration rules to produce a strikingly varied set of outcomes. 'Asians' are by no means all the same.

Yet, even though my central aim in this chapter has been to highlight the extent and the complexity of some of the differences so produced, I am still very conscious of the extent to which I have been forced to simplify while setting forward my analysis. First, I have treated both 'Sikhs' and 'Mirpuris' as if they formed two internally homogeneous groups. But in the Sikh case this could be regarded as most misleading, for the community is actually strongly differentiated in terms of both class and caste. Members of the Jat (peasant-farmer), Ramgarhia (craftsman) and Bhatia (pedlar) castes have not only formed their own networks, but have also set off on strikingly different trajectories." Second, I have ignored the immense complexity of the Punjabi presence in Britain, for by no means all Jullunduris are Sikh, nor are British Pakistanis all Mirpuri; and although it is particularly illuminating to contrast, at least for heuristic purposes, the strikingly different social trajectories of these two groups, it would be quite wrong to assume, for example, that all other Punjabi Moslems behave in the same way as the Mirpuris. In fact those from *nehri* areas such as Sialkot and Faisalabad have followed equally complex trajectories which fall somewhere between those which have been highlighted here, while the

small community of Jullunduri Moslems - and especially those members of the Arain caste who have moved into the clothing business - have now become at least as affluent as the Sikhs.

To those unfamiliar with the complexities of the Punjabi social order, it may well seem extremely tempting to overlook all these apparently obscure and esoteric dimensions of social and cultural variation. But the consequences of doing so are clear: in the absence of an awareness of such diversities, statements about 'Asians', 'Punjabis' and 'Sikhs' will be reduced to a broadly generalised mean. This is a grave mistake. Anyone who wishes to come fully to terms with the nature of the South Asian presence in Britain, both in terms of the increasingly salient variations in the quality of its members' lifestyles, and of the causes and consequences of those variations, has no alternative but to take these complexities aboard.

Notes

¹ Most of the empirical material presented in this chapter is based on my own personal fieldwork observations. These have not only focused on the Jullunduri and Mirpuri population in West Yorkshire, but also on migrants' villages of origin in Punjab. I carried out extensive fieldwork in both areas in 1972/3, 1981, and again in 1984/5 (and during the final period with support from an ESRC grant).

² Since an 'ethnic question' was not asked in the 1981 Census, making an estimate of the size of Britain's minority population is a complex enough task (Ballard 1983b); estimating the size of the various components of the Punjabi presence presents many more problems, and these figures are no more than my own informed guesses.

³ There is now an extensive literature on the process of Punjabi migration to and settlement in Britain. Besides my own work, Saifullah-Khan (1976a, 1976b, 1977) has written extensively about Mirpuris, and Aurora (1967), James (1974) and Helweg (1979) about Sikhs. Shaw (1988) presents a very valuable comprehensive account of the Punjabi Moslem presence in Oxford, and Anwar (1979) of that in Rochdale.

⁴ Bhachu (1985, 1988) presents a very graphic account of the extent of upward social mobility among (predominantly East African Ramgarhia) Sikhs in West London.

⁵ According to the Labour Force Survey (1986), no less than 20% of adult male Indians (not all of whom are Sikhs, of course) were self-employed when the survey was carried out; only 16% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were in the same position. Meanwhile the unemployment rate amongst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis was then 30%, as compared to 15% for Indians and only 11% for whites.

⁶ Detailed accounts of Punjabi family and kinship Organisation in Punjab can be found in Alavi (1972), Ballard (1982), Eglar (1960), Hershman (1981) and Kessinger (1975).

⁷ Saifullah-Khan (1976a) presents a very detailed account of the practice of *pardah*.

⁸ Aurora's account (1967) of life during the early phase of the Sikh settlement in Southall is particularly illuminating with respect to these assumptions.

⁹ The personal and domestic contradictions often encountered by returnees to Mirpur from Britain are discussed in much greater detail in Ballard (1986).

¹⁰ For an analysis of the extent and significance of internal differentiation amongst British Sikhs, see Ballard (1989).

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