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*Exploring the Mindset of the British-Pakistani  
Community: the Socio-Cultural and Religious Context*

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## Introduction<sup>i</sup>

The arrival of Pakistanis in Britain began in the middle of the twentieth century. After World War II and the Industrial Revolution, Britain apprehended a lack of workforce, prompting it to attract people from newly-independent countries, especially from the Commonwealth member countries, to avail better economic conditions in Britain. Pakistan also encouraged its citizens to avail the opportunity. In the 1950s, thousands of Pakistanis arrived in Britain to explore these opportunities. Even before 1950, some people from the Indian Subcontinent living in Britain belonged to areas that became part of Pakistan after 1947. But the 1950s migration is considered the first major shift of the Pakistani labor force to Britain.<sup>ii</sup>

People from the Subcontinent who had settled in Britain before the creation of Pakistan predominantly worked at ports, and the new migrants also sought work in the same field. Initially, these people settled in London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Hill, Newcastle, and Edinburgh and along areas close to major British harbors. A gradual increase in the local population and decreasing employment opportunities suitable for their skills forced them to relocate to cities like Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham and Hampton.

Most Pakistani migrants had come to Britain with a view to return to Pakistan once they had saved enough money. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s their numbers increased. Men came over first and their wives, children and other dependants followed. By the 1970s, many Pakistanis working in Britain started thinking that it would be difficult to return home due to a number of factors, including higher living standards in Britain, the need to maintain their new businesses, their children being enrolled in British schools and the political instability in Pakistan.<sup>iii</sup> During the 1960s, immigration controls also made it increasingly difficult for the migrants to move in and out of Britain. That also persuaded many migrants to bring their families to Britain, becoming settled communities rather than transitory group of male workers.

According to the 2001 Census in Britain, there were more than 700,000 British-Pakistanis, who had migrated from across Pakistan. Recent estimates suggest this number has now surged to over one million.<sup>iv</sup> There is a significant concentration of Pakistanis in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Wales, Nottingham, London and Bradford, which is often called 'mini Pakistan'.<sup>v</sup> British-Pakistanis hail from various cities, particularly from Mirpur in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), as well as the Pakistani cities of Attock, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur, Gujjar Khan, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi and the interior parts of Sindh.

This research study seeks to explore the background, both in Britain and in Pakistan, and the current status of British-Pakistanis with particular reference to their socio-cultural and religious contexts. The scope of the study is limited to a survey sample representative of British-Pakistanis from Mirpur district in AJK. Mirpur occupies a unique place in the context of UK-Pakistan relations. More than 42% of British-Pakistanis are natives of this district. In cities like Bradford and Birmingham, the people from Mirpur make up about 90% of the Pakistani population.<sup>vi</sup> This study has also endeavored to determine the changing patterns of political, cultural and economic life in Mirpur district. The overall aim of the study was to understand the psychological identity and mindset of these British-Pakistanis, rooted in their native homeland and conditioned by the socio-cultural

discourse of their host society; and hence to identify and analyze their potential to assimilate in or deviate from the society they are now a part of.

The focus of the study has been justified by the fact that migrants from Mirpur district are not only the strongest Pakistani community in Great Britain in terms of numbers but also the most cohesive and culturally distinct group there. Their impact on the politics and culture of British-Pakistanis is profound. At the same time, the migrant community from Mirpur has also maintained an intimate relationship with the place of their origin. Mirpur has been transformed as much by its UK-based population as the cities of their abode in Britain have been influenced by the migrants from Mirpur. One factor responsible for this significant migrant majority from Mirpur is the Pakistani government's decision in 1960 to build Mangla Dam near Mirpur. The government issued passports to one member of each family displaced by the dam's construction. Those who got their passports mostly moved to Britain.

### **Research Methodology and Approach**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 British-Pakistanis from Mirpur district [with intervals] while they were visiting their native areas. The sample group was randomly selected from both rural and urban areas of the district. A team of three researchers conducted the interviews between January 1 and April 30, 2007, under the auspices of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS). Besides personal information like the age, education, marital status, profession and duration of stay in Britain, the respondents were also asked a range of questions to assess their economic status and socio-cultural, political and religious trends. They were also asked about their affiliations with any religious organization, political party, charities, NGOs or any other group in Pakistan or Britain. The interviewers sought comprehensive views on the socio-cultural and religious norms in the two countries, British foreign policy, war on terror, Kashmir dispute and how the respondents were treated in Britain and Pakistan. Observations of the relatives and families of British-Pakistanis in Mirpur were also recorded at the time of the interviews. Besides this primary data, books, articles and textual documents on the British-Pakistani community were also consulted.

The data was used to develop the two parts of the research analysis. A theoretical study forms the first part of the paper -- giving a profile of Mirpur district; whereas an empirical study, mostly based on the primary data, forms the second part - aimed at understanding the British-Pakistani community's mindset. Most of the data has been analyzed qualitatively while identified variables have been controlled statistically and merged in the report where needed.

## KNOWLEDGE FOR PEACE

Since all interviews were conducted in Mirpur district, the availability of the British-Pakistani respondents from Mirpur during their visits to Pakistan within the duration of the four-month field research perhaps could not serve as a homogenous representative sample of the target community in Britain. Moreover all the respondents belonged to male gender only. Due to some cultural and religious constraints the women could not be interviewed. A wider sample selection and a study over a longer period of time, and in both countries, would obviously have been more accurate and precise in accessing the community's mindset and trends.

## Part-I: Profile of Mirpur District

### Geography

Area: 1,010 square kilometers.

Population: 333,482 (as recorded in the 1998 Census)<sup>vii</sup>

Sub-divisions: Mirpur district is divided into two sub-divisions, or tehsils, Mirpur and Dadyaal.

Main towns: Major towns in the district include Mangla, Chakswari, Afzal Pur, Cheechyan, Islamgarh and Khari Sharif.

### Location and Topography

Mirpur is a district in the Pakistan-administered AJK. Though in a hilly terrain, it mainly consists of plains. Mirpur city is located at 33° 11' E latitude and 73° 45' N longitude. Other districts in the vicinity are Kotli, 100km to the north, Bhimber, 50km to the east and Gujjar Khan and Rawalpindi in the west. Mirpur is adjacent to the Punjab province and is 28 km from the famous Grand Trunk Road.<sup>viii</sup>

Mirpur is the biggest city of AJK. It is 1,500 feet above sea level while the old city of Mirpur was 1,236 feet above sea level.<sup>ix</sup> The inhabitants were shifted to the new city as Mangla the old city and 125 adjacent villages were flooded after to the construction of Mangla Dam.<sup>x</sup>

### Climate

The area's climate is similar to that of the Punjab. In the summer it is very hot, while winters are very cold. Mangla Dam is situated near the new Mirpur city. It is a masterpiece of construction, stretching over 100 miles, and is being extended to store more water. The project generates almost 35% of Pakistan's electricity.<sup>xi</sup>

### History

Most historians agree that Mirpur was founded by Miran Shah Gakharr in 1051 and was named after him.<sup>xii</sup>

The army of Alexander the Great crossed the River Jhelum here and met the army of Indian king Porus at the foot of what is now Mirpur. Alexander defeated Porus in the historic Battle of Hydaspes in 326 BC.<sup>xiii</sup>

Before the Dogra dynasty began, which ruled Kashmir until 1947, the Gakharr, Mangral and Jaral tribes ruled over this region under a feudal system for a period of 600 years -- from 1300 to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xiv</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's regime flirted with the idea of merging the state of Kashmir and other states to form a central government. The proponent of this idea was Dogra Gulab Singh of Jammu. After Ranjeet Singh's death, Gulab Singh bought the state in March 1846 with the help of British rulers. Under the sale deed signed in Amritsar, he bought Kashmir along with its attached states and their inhabitants for 7.5 million Nanakshahi coins.<sup>xv</sup>

Muslim landlords did not build houses or settled in the cities of Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimber during the colonial period, despite educational, health facilities and economic opportunities in these cities. Other major cities in Mirpur's vicinity, such as Rawalpindi and Jhelum, had attracted a lot of Muslim landlords during the colonial period but Kashmiri Muslim landlords were reluctant to leave their traditions imbedded in rural soil. However, during the British rule, some Muslim landlords and 'Maafidars' (owners of rent-free land) in Mirpur were providing administrative assistance to the central government.<sup>xvi</sup>

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the geographic division of Mirpur district was done in such a manner that separated it from other regions of Kashmir in almost all aspects of life. Its social values, language, folksongs and culture were distinct from the rest of Kashmir.

Mirpur established and maintained its cultural, literary, social and linguistic association with the region of Pothohar, especially the districts of Rawalpindi and Jhelum.<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Class Division**

In 1947, around 64 villages in the district were feudal property whereas 336 were assigned to 'Maafidars'. In these villages, the majority of the population was Muslim. At the time of partition of British India, there were 3,382 landlords with land holding of at least 100 kanals each. Among those, 3,010 were Muslim and 372 non-Muslim.<sup>xviii</sup>

Before 1947, Mirpur district consisted of two distinct social classes: the ruling elite, consisting of feudal lords, tribal chiefs, bureaucrats and prominent businessmen; and the poor masses engaged in farming, labor and handicrafts.<sup>xix</sup> Significant numbers of men began to migrate from the area towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Traveling south to Bombay, many found work in the docks, and took jobs on ships as the port grew busier.<sup>xx</sup> With the exposure came awareness of the socio-economic differences they faced in their native areas, which later led them to leave the country for a better future.<sup>xxi</sup>

Today's Mirpur is not divided on those lines, mainly due to the area's prosperity after a large number of Mirpur's residents migrated to Britain.

### **Mirpur's Role in the Freedom Movement of Kashmir**

The people of this district support the freedom movement in Indian-held Kashmir (IHK) by all means. Some youth from the outskirts of Mirpur were trained in jihadi camps and died fighting in IHK.<sup>xxii</sup> Natives of the area also provide funds to jihadi organizations and have raised the Kashmir issue in Europe, America and at the United Nations. British-Pakistanis from Mirpur support the

Kashmir freedom movement in Britain from the platform of organizations like the Kashmir Foundation and Kashmir Welfare Association. Several other political and religious organizations from AJK also operate in the United Kingdom.<sup>xxiii</sup>

All AJK political parties have offices in Britain. Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, a resident of Mirpur, is a former AJK premier and one of the most prominent advocates of Kashmir's freedom from Indian rule. The UK chapters of these parties lobby the British government to use its influence to solve the Kashmir issue. Most of them consider the jihad in Kashmir a legitimate freedom struggle which cannot be equated with terrorism. Yet, most of those interviewed by PIPS preferred a negotiated solution to a military one.

Only a small number of expatriates from Mirpur concede providing funds to jihadi organizations. But parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami support the jihad openly. Its members not only donate funds but also provide manpower for jihad. The Jamaat ud-Da'awa also provides funds and 'human resource' for the Kashmir jihad.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### Education System

Mirpur has made significant progress in education over time. The city has separate university campuses for girls and boys, an engineering university, a distance education university, a paramedics' school, an elementary college, a teachers' training college, a technology college, a women's university and a home economics college. The Intermediate Education Board offices are also based here. There is an intermediate college every 15km in Mirpur and a degree college every 40km. There are numerous private and public schools in the city.<sup>xxv</sup>

Modern computer education institutions are flourishing in the city. Literary activities are being promoted by the Saiful Malook Arts Academy. A medical college has also recently started functioning in Mirpur.

### Health

Mirpur has adequate healthcare facilities. A District Headquarters Hospital is located in the city. A local philanthropist Haji Muhammad Saleem has sponsored a cardiac hospital, built at a cost of Rs 15 million. The hospital is now run by the government. AJK's only dialysis centre is working in Mirpur under the supervision of the Human Welfare Society. Around 15 private hospitals in the city mainly provide services to the well-off residents.

### Social Structure

Mirpur is not only a beautiful city but also a cradle of affluence and peace. The expatriate community has built luxurious houses in their native towns and villages but there are usually no residents in these palatial houses. Though settled in Britain the expatriates have built these huge houses as a mark of social status and prestige. Most expatriates visit their native areas during holidays or on occasions such as weddings, funerals or Eid. In some cases, UK-based owners of these houses in Mirpur pay money for maintenance to their tenants instead of receiving rent from

them.<sup>xxvi</sup> Remittances from expatriates have helped develop a network of social welfare organizations and public service projects.

The old generation of Mirpur, even though settled in the UK, tends to keep traditional values alive. Though influenced to some extent by the western culture, they strictly follow local traditions whenever they visit Mirpur along with their children to attend any family function.

Most of them prefer to find a spouse in Pakistan for their children so they could invite other members of their clans to live in Britain.<sup>xxvii</sup>

### Religious Trends

Mirpur is called the city of *khanqahs* (hermitages) and *darbars* (shrines). Kashmir has been known to be the site of graves of prophets of the pre-Christ era and has attracted pilgrims for centuries. The shrines of Muslim saints are a continuation of that phenomenon.

Islam is the religion of a vast majority of people of Jammu and Kashmir. Much of that is due to *sufis*, or mystics, from Punjab who settled in this region. Pothohari, Punjabi and Pahari cultures have left indelible marks on Kashmir's culture and society. Mirpur has a special cultural and spiritual affinity with the Punjab.

### Sufis and Saints

Punjab's *sufis* and saints have had a special place in Mirpur's religious history. Many of the itinerant preachers permanently settled here and their shrines are revered to this day. Pir-e-Shah Ghazi Qalandri Tharyanvali established a spiritual centre in Khari Sharif. His disciple Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, one of the greatest Punjabi poets, was also from Khari Sharif. The list of *sufis* and saints who have shaped the religious beliefs in this region is long. Some of the more famous ones are Hafiz Muhammad Muqem, Baba Shaker Shaheed, Buleh Shah, Wali Shaheed, Pir Miraan Shah, Baba Shamsuddin, Saein Barkat Ali Sarkar, Hafiz Muhammad Abdullah, Sayeed Lala Badshah and Naikk Alam Shah.<sup>xxviii</sup>

This relationship with *sufis* explains why the more violent versions of Islam have not taken root in this region until very recently. Even today, the main cultural festivals in the region are the annual *urs* (anniversary) at shrines, attracting followers from afar.

### Language

Mirpur's culture, traditions and language share similarities with the Punjab districts such as Gujrat, Jhelum and Rawalpindi. Pahari, Punjabi, Pothohari, Gojari, and Kashmiri are the most widely spoken languages in Mirpur. The local language of the area is a blend of Pothohari, Pahari and Punjabi. A variety of dialects can be heard in routine conversations. The people of this region take pride in its history of great poets, scholars, writers, and *sufis* who have turned this region into a land of literature and spiritualism.



## Food and Dress Code

Wheat bread is the staple food, and is usually consumed with vegetables, grains, meat, butter or yogurt. Corn and millet bread with spinach are also part of the daily diet in villages. Despite Mirpur's proximity to Mangla Dam, fish is expensive and not very common.

*Shalwar kameez* (long shirt and baggy trousers) is the most common dress but western dresses have also become acceptable because of expatriates' influence. Male villagers wear *kurta* (long shirt) with a *tehmand* (long drape worn as a loincloth), whereas women wear *shalwar kurtas* and cover their head.

## Sports Facilities

Football, volleyball, bull race, dog fights, traditional wrestling (*beeny*), spear fighting, hockey, and cricket are the popular sports in Mirpur. The main sports arena is Quaid-e- Azam Stadium.

## Journalism

All major national daily newspapers have readership in Mirpur. The only daily newspaper published from Mirpur is '*Jazba*', which concentrates on local news. A few weekly and monthly magazines are also published in the district. As expatriates fund most of these magazines, the activities of British nationals of Mirpuri origin are extensively covered. Mirpur's journalism is known for advocating the residents' point of view regarding plans to expand Mangla Dam.

## Economics and Trade

During and after the Dogra rule, trade in Mirpur was dominated by Hindus. Muslims were mostly farmers whereas many used donkeys to transport luggage and crops from one place to another, making up for lack of roads and mechanized transport.<sup>xxix</sup>

Because of low crop yields, local residents used to go abroad to earn their living. Besides working in brick kilns, road construction and menial labor, they also worked as porters at warehouses and railway stations. Away from their own country, some joined merchant shipping and also reached countries like Britain, Australia and the United States. During World War II, the British army also recruited from its colonies. Pakistan's founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had also urged Muslims to join the army. As many as 60,402 young men were recruited from Poonch and Mirpur districts of Jammu and Kashmir State in undivided India. After Pakistan's independence from British rule, many people from Mirpur migrated to Britain when Mangla Dam was constructed. They gave up their properties in exchange for passports to travel and settle abroad as compensation. That led to a positive change in Mirpur's economy.<sup>xxx</sup>

While working abroad, expatriates from Mirpur have been catering to the needs of their families in their native towns and striving for the prosperity of these towns and indeed their native country. With their earnings abroad, they have transformed Mirpur into a major business hub. Magnificent

mansions, skyscrapers, business centers, spacious three- and four-star hotels and restaurants testify their contribution.

Equipped with better education, the residents of Mirpur have joined various government institutions including the judiciary and the security forces. Women of the area have also joined government jobs. The private sector employs many people in construction firms, factories, private hospitals, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).<sup>xxxii</sup>

### ***Mirpur Industrial Area***

Mirpur has been declared an industrial estate and hundreds of industrial units are working in this area, earning a large amount of foreign exchange. These factories' products include silk and other cloth, wool, garments, cement and chemicals, cooking oil, sugar, biscuits, herbal medicines, soap, cigarettes, soft drinks, electrical appliances, scooters and rickshaws, vehicle parts, tyres and rubber, ammunition, steel products, optical instruments, furniture, matches and shoes. Dozens of factories are located in Mirpur city's Dhok Bhago area, covering 7,500 kanals of land. This area's industrial development started in 1988 and it now has around 40 factories.

## **Politics**

### ***Political Structure***

Mirpur district is the center of political activities in AJK. Politics of this region revolves around clans, religious sectarianism and personalities, even affecting British-Pakistanis. People of various castes and clans live here and, with clan an important factor in local politics; the Jatt clan has gained prominence.

Mirpur is an increasingly politically aware district of AJK. Most of the population is educated and keenly observes national and international developments. All the political and religious parties of AJK have offices and representatives in Mirpur.

The political and religious leaders in Mirpur are financially sound compared to other AJK districts, due largely to their connections with the British-Pakistani community. Some immigrants come here from Britain to take part in politics.

### ***Important Political Parties<sup>xxxiii</sup>***

Some of the important political parties of the region are:

#### **1. Pakistan People's Party, Azad Kashmir**

A wing of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), its city president is Chaudhry Abdul Majid. PPP had a massive vote bank in Mirpur but lost significant support after Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry left the party. However, the party still retains substantial support in the district.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

#### **2. All Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference**

Sardar Attiq Ahmed Khan heads the party in AJK and Naveed Goga is the president of its Mirpur district chapter.

### 3. People's Muslim League

Barrister Sultan Mahmood and his supporters founded this party after quitting the PPP, Azad Kashmir, in 2005.

### 4. Jammu Kashmir Liberation League

KH Khursheed (late) was the founder of this party. Its president is Justice (retired) Abdul Majeed Malik, a resident of Mirpur.

### 5. Muttahida Qaumi Movement

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement has emerged in Azad Kashmir after the October 2005 earthquake. Tahir Khokhar, a former member of the National Assembly, is its organizer in Mirpur.

### 6. Jammu Kashmir People's Party

Sardar Ibrahim Khan is the founder of this party which is a breakaway faction of the PPP, Azad Kashmir. This party has little influence in Mirpur.

### *Nationalist Parties*

Apart from these political parties, some nationalist parties also have a presence in Mirpur district. They have been calling for an undivided Kashmir, independent of Pakistani or Indian rule. These parties cannot participate in elections because they do not adhere to the constitutional requirement regarding affiliation to Pakistan and, therefore, are ineligible. However, they wield significant influence and play an active role amongst immigrants. Public support for these parties lies in their raising a voice for the rights of Mirpur. "Besides Kashmir, people are passionately attached to Mirpur also and this attachment can be observed in Britain as well," said Saeed Ahmed Assad, a social welfare officer in Mirpur, in an interview with PIPS.

Nationalist parties represented in Mirpur are as follows:

#### 1. Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front

Amanullah Khan is the founder of this party while its chairman is Sardar Saghir Ahmed. Abdul Majid Butt represents the party in Mirpur.

#### 2. National Liberation Front

Its chairman is Shaukat Maqbool Butt, a son of Maqbool Butt, who was hanged by the Indian authorities. The party is very popular in Mirpur and is seen as championing the cause of Kashmir's freedom.

### 3. Jammu Kashmir People's National Party

Two splinter groups of this party are working in Mirpur district. One is led by Advocate Ejaz Nazir, and the other by Advocate Zulfiqar Raja. These groups consist of former members of the leftist National Students Federation.

### *Religious Parties*

Some religious parties have influence in Mirpur district. However, a majority of voters do not support them as they are committed to other major parties and leaders. The religious parties working in Mirpur are:

#### 1. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

Following the Pakistani religious parties' alliance, the MMA was also formed in AJK but badly lost in the 2002 elections. The alliance no longer exists in Mirpur.

#### 2. Jamaat-e-Islami

Sardar Ejaz Afzal Khan heads the AJK Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), a chapter of JI Pakistan. The Hizbul Mujahideen is its jihadi wing. The party has a strong presence in Mirpur. Major (retired) Iftikhar Hashmi heads the party in Mirpur.

#### 3. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)

Qari Muhammad Gulzar is the JUI Mirpur district president. The party has backing in mosques and madrassas (seminaries) but lacks popular support.

#### 4. Jamiat Ulema-e-Jammu Kashmir

Sahibzada Attiq Rehman Faizpuri, a resident of Mirpur, heads this party. Many expatriates from Mirpur also consider his elders their spiritual guides. The party is in an alliance with the Muslim Conference.

#### 5. Jamaat ud-Da'awa<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Shaikh Muhammad Fahim is the head of Jamaat ud-Da'awa in Mirpur. The party lacks influence in the region but is constantly working on different projects in Mirpur, including private schools and welfare organizations. This party has been propagating its views and ideology amongst the visiting British-Pakistani youth and inciting them for jihad. The Lashkar-e-Taiba is its jihadi wing.

#### 6. Jamaat-e-Ahle Hadith

The party is working in Mirpur district but has a very limited membership. Sadiq Ameer heads the party's Mirpur chapter.

## 7. Pakistani Awami Tehreek

The Pakistani Awami Tehreek of Dr Tahirul Qadri and its educational wing, the Minhaj ul-Quran, work in Mirpur, where Tahir Iqbal heads it. The party runs a number of schools.

## 8. Jammu Kashmir Islami Tehreek

This party claims to work for the interests of the Shia sect. Mirpur district has a large Shia community, but the party has no influence among other regions and sects.

### **Madrassas in Mirpur**

There are around 40 religious madrassas working in the district, representing different schools of thought and religious sects. These madrassas give education of *Hifz* (Quranic memorization), *Nazra* (reading), *Qirat* (recitation) and Islamic studies. Mainly people from the lower middle class send their children to these madrassas while the rich prefer mainstream schools for formal education of their children.

These madrassas are working under the supervision of different schools of thought. A religious centre of the Dukhtraan-e-Islam (daughters of Islam) is also working in Mirpur. Likewise, the Jamaat ud-Da'awa and Jamaat-ul-Islam Model Islamic School are imparting Islamic education along with computer education. Different mosques and madrassas are imparting Quranic education.

The sect/party-wise breakdown of madrassas in Mirpur district is as under:<sup>xxxv</sup>

Barelvi	=20
Deobandi	=12
Jamaat-e-Islami	=03
Ahle-Hadith	=03

One madrassa is being run by the AJK Auqaf Department.

### **Jihadi Organizations in Mirpur**

Many jihadi organizations have opened offices in Mirpur and receive substantial support from affluent people of the area. Being close to the famous jihadi district of Kotli, Mirpur has also been influenced by jihadi activities. A list of organizations with offices in Mirpur is as follows:

1. Jaish-e-Muhammad
2. Harkat ul-Mujahideen
3. Lashkar-e-Taiba

4. Sunni Jihad Council (Al Barq)
5. Ansar ul-Islam
6. Tehreek-e-Jihad
7. Hizb ul-Momineen
8. Hizb ul-Mujahideen
9. Hizb-e-Islami

#### NGOs<sup>xxxvi</sup>

More than 100 NGOs are operating in Mirpur. About 90% of them depend upon donations from Kashmiri expatriates. Some of these organizations have been set up by people who have returned from the UK. These NGOs have provided employment to many people and also provide humanitarian services.

#### **Part-II: Understanding the British-Pakistani Community**

The British-Pakistani community is the second largest expatriate community in Britain after Indians. According to the 2001 Census, 747,285 Pakistani immigrants were living in Britain, while unofficial sources claim the number has now risen to one million. Divided on regional, ethnic, and political lines, Pakistani immigrants form 1.3% of Britain's population.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Although precise figures are not available, it is estimated that there are currently over 300,000 natives of Mirpur living and working in Britain. In cities such as Bradford and Birmingham, up to 90% of Pakistanis trace their roots to Mirpur.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

#### **Socio-cultural Evolution**

Britain was a new world for many immigrants from backward areas of rural Pakistan, lacking even the basic amenities of life. A large number of Pakistanis arrived in Britain between 1962 and 1966.<sup>xxxix</sup> Their first priority was to ensure financial stability and prosperity. Initially they lodged with friends or relatives, and managed to get community support in a new society. Pakistani immigrants buying a new house in any locality attracted other Pakistani friends and relatives to form a new community there. This practice increased the population of Pakistani migrants in British cities. Pakistanis already living there were very helpful to the newcomers, even providing food, shelter and other necessities to the latter.<sup>xl</sup> Even today many well-off Pakistanis settled in Britain keenly help new immigrants.

Immigrants deemed forming a community inevitable for economic, social and religious survival in a multicultural British society.

The people of Mirpur led the way for such Pakistani immigrants' settlements and communal evolution. Haji Hassan Muhammad from Mirpur's Dadyaal sub-divisions got a job on a ship in 1914. On reaching London in 1918, he left the ship and went to Newcastle and worked as a door-to-door salesman for some time before setting up a warehouse. He was the first Asian to establish a warehouse in Newcastle. He recruited a large number of women to stitch ready-made garments. One of his sons, Haji Abdul Rehman, is settled near Birmingham now.<sup>xli</sup>

Since settling in Britain, British-Pakistanis have been trying to adapt themselves to British culture, with some psychological resistance that varies from person to person. The first generation of immigrants from Pakistan tried hard to safeguard and propagate their cultural values but their children, who were brought up in British society, are fed up with their ancestral traditions.<sup>xliii</sup>

"With the passage of time things kept changing, adding to social problems. Poverty and unemployment was the basic problem. Much of our time was spent in the upbringing of our families and retaining our tradition and culture, while other people, focused on setting up industries, and became a better nation. As we were new to the country, my father advised me to wear western clothes while going out and seek help from the English in case of getting lost. Now we have lost our status. The double standards have driven the new generation away from their homes. The inner cities' system of Britain is good but we neither gained anything from it nor accepted it and remained backward," said a British-Pakistani from Mirpur.<sup>xliiii</sup>

A considerable number of respondents attributed this non-acceptance to British culture not conforming to their native culture. Some said they had adopted those British values which were in harmony with their own culture. Only a few respondents were of the view that they were British citizens, therefore they embraced British culture except a few things, which they said were against the religion and *Shariah*.

Besides their native socio-cultural traditions and religion, the clan and caste system of immigrants also influenced their social evolution in Britain. Reluctant to adopt British culture, they arranged marriages of their children with their relatives or within the clan in their native areas. This ensured the British-Pakistani community's increased isolation from the host society. According to a research in 2005, 55% of British-Pakistanis were married to their first cousins.<sup>xliv</sup> PIPS also observed during its fieldwork that parents' non-acceptance of their children adopting 'modern' British culture played a key role in such marriages. Some British-Pakistanis suggested that such marriages were not natural because of crucial differences between the cultures where the spouses grew up. However, most of the respondents observed that they had seen a sense of adaptability in a majority of cases, though in some cases such marriages had failed as well.

In order to maintain their religious identity and to retain a respectable position in their respective caste, the parents even resorted to extreme measures to get their children, especially girls, married to boys of their own sect and caste. Many incidents have been recorded of British-Pakistani parents bringing their daughters to Pakistan and getting them forcibly married. Such forced marriages are not confined to Pakistani families but are also found among other Asian communities. The British government has established rescue centers on different airports to avoid such situations.<sup>xlv</sup>

Lack of education was another major factor that hindered the British-Pakistani community's integration with the host community and kept them lagging behind other Asian communities.

Instead of improving their education, the new generations of British-Pakistanis fell far behind the host society and even their parents who had somehow managed to get education in their native lands. The British-Pakistanis interviewed by the PIPS team were from different educational background. Education was not a criterion for their selection, but even so PIPS found that 90% of the respondents had an educational qualification between matriculation and postgraduate and only 10% were below matriculation or illiterate (see Table 1). All of them belonged to the early generations of immigrants, many from the first generation of British-Pakistanis.

**Table 1 :Levels of education of respondent British-Pakistanis from Mirpur**

Total respondents	Matriculate	Intermediate	Graduate	Post-graduate	Below matriculation
50	12 (24%)	10 (20%)	10 (20%)	13 (26%)	5 (10%)

*Even though education is compulsory for everyone in Britain, most children of British-Pakistanis remain unqualified even after regularly going to school for the stipulated period. Those lucky enough to complete their GCSE are unable to complete their higher studies.<sup>xlvi</sup>*

*GCSE is considered basic education in Britain and 78% boys and 63% girls from the British-Pakistani community cannot complete even this first level of education. Consequently they find it difficult to get employment. Only 7% boys get a university degree. Almost 40% females and 27% males are illiterate.<sup>xlvi</sup>*

The percentage of the students passing GCSE, according to the 2001 Census in Britain, is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Percentage of students passing GCSE**

<i>Indian girls</i>	<b>66%</b>
<i>English girls</i>	<b>55%</b>
<i>Indian boys</i>	<b>54%</b>
<i>African girls</i>	<b>46%</b>
<i>English boys</i>	<b>45%</b>
<i>Pakistani/ Bengali girls</i>	<b>37%</b>
<i>Pakistani boys</i>	<b>22%</b>

### **Barriers to Social Interaction**

All four Muslim members of the British parliament are of Pakistan origin. British-Pakistanis own many major businesses in Britain. There are more than 100 multi-millionaire Pakistanis in Britain. But there are hurdles that still bar British-Pakistanis from sufficient social interaction and playing a



more active role in British society. Regarding the attitude of British Muslims towards the host society and vice versa, renowned British psychologist and scholar Dr Thomas Reynold observes, “British Muslims, especially Pakistanis remain aloof from others and do not make any efforts to integrate with the values and customs of British society. British Muslims have set up their own societies. Those Muslims, who have been living in Britain for the last fifty years and above, have yet been unable to get comfortably mixed with the native Britain”.<sup>xlvi</sup>

### *Language*

Urdu is the main language spoken by Pakistanis. Regional languages, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi and Pashto, are also spoken. Observations suggest that many British-Pakistani families are more at ease speaking their mother tongue at home rather than the language of their adopted country.

When the first generation of migrants brought their families to Britain for availing allowances and financial support from the government, they were also hindered by illiteracy and lack of English proficiency.

A very high proportion of wives who arrived in Britain from Bangladesh (which was part of Pakistan until 1971) and Pakistan through arranged marriages were not conversant in English.<sup>xlix</sup> That was why their social interaction remained limited to the people living in their neighborhood which included Pakistani, Indian and Bengali families. In Bradford, poor language skills of a large number of British women of Pakistani descent are on display. Ann Cryer, the MP for Keighley in West Yorkshire, has been raising the issue since the 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford -- which were blamed on race segregation -- concerned about Muslim women who cannot speak English. She claimed that many young women who were brought to Bradford as wives from the immigrants’ native countries and were deliberately discouraged from learning English by their in-laws. Children were consequently starting school with no awareness of the English language.<sup>1</sup>

### *Education*

Lack of education is also a major barrier to social interaction of British-Pakistanis in Britain. This keeps them confined to their private businesses. They are less inclined towards employment in fields like medicine, engineering or law. The main reason for that lack of interest is the poor educational background of those immigrants who came to Britain to seek better employment opportunities for which most of them did not qualify. They also did not encourage or guide their children to acquire modern professional education. Moreover, many preferred to send their children to British Muslim seminaries. As a result, economic prospects of a considerable majority of the new generation of British-Pakistanis were limited to following their parents into the family’s private business for economic survival.

### *Religion*

Religion has also been cited as a major hurdle in social interaction of British-Pakistanis. The conservative approach of Muslim clerics did not let Muslims intermingle with the British people.

They apparently apprehended that such interaction could somehow dilute or threaten their religious faith. On the other hand, the recent wave of global terrorism has also been sending wrong signals to the British about British-Pakistanis. Since 9/11, many Pakistanis have faced increased racial attacks and profiling, especially young men, who are now more likely to be stopped and searched than any other ethnic minority group. This has a bearing on how young British-Pakistanis see themselves and their place in British society and may also affect their employment prospects and social life.

### Formations of Identity and Mindset

So where do British-Pakistanis stand in British society? Who are we referring to when we use the term 'British-Pakistani' in relation to modern Britain? Do the people referred to as British-Pakistanis describe themselves the same way? Have they kept a distinct identity while socialization in Britain or have they let that go? What is the basis of their identity?

Already reluctant to being completely absorbed into British society due to a range of factors, British-Pakistanis are now becoming more unyielding in their views. They reject terrorism and the so-called 'war on terror' because both are affecting them. About 32% of British-Pakistanis interviewed by PIPS said they favored the war on terror (more than 70% of the respondents favoring the anti-terror war did so because they believed terrorism was portraying Muslims in a negative light, leading to stereotyping and creating problems for them in their host country), 44% condemned it (they said the 'war' was biased), 30% said it was creating more terrorists, whereas 22% chose not to answer the question. Similarly their opinion was almost equally divided on British foreign policy with special reference to the war on terror -- as many as 34% favored and 30% renounced it, whereas 36% chose not to respond (see Table 3 & 4). It was also observed that their concern about the war on terror was mostly influenced by negative portrayal of their image and identity as Muslims living in Britain. Most of them could not help their identity being established through a social prism which stereotypically identified them as an extremist entity. This has pushed them even closer to their already formed socio-cultural and religious mindset, which has been forcing them to remain aloof, to varying degrees, from mainstream British culture and society.

**Table 3: Stance on war on terror (WoT)**

Total respondents	Favored	Renounced	Did not reply
50	17 (34%)	22 (44%)	11 (22%)

**Table 4: Stance on British foreign policy with reference to WoT**

Total respondents	Favored	Rejected	Did not reply
50	17 (34%)	15 (30%)	18 (36%)

Resultantly, "an unprecedented perception of 'collective identity' has occurred to British Muslims' with much greater frequency in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. After going through similar treatment on account of sharing a common religious faith, they have developed a will to get a

collective identity that is getting stronger than regional and racial identities. A big majority of British-Pakistanis has come very close to their religion and are coming even closer. They have abandoned the cultural norms that they had adopted while living in their religious sphere. They have firmly embraced their religious beliefs, responding negatively to the expectations of this logical world.”<sup>li</sup>

The PIPS study of British-Pakistanis hailing from Mirpur supports the findings of Yunis Alam and Charles Husband<sup>lii</sup> that Islam was an important facet of these immigrants’ spiritual, moral and political life. They had gathered insights, experiences and narratives from 25 men aged 16-38 that shed light on being a Bradford man of Pakistani and Muslim heritage. However, PIPS has also found that besides religion, their socio-cultural background in their native lands, barriers to social interaction, lack of education and economic opportunities, political isolation and absence of a proper assimilation mechanism played a key role in evolving their socio-cultural mindset in their host society. And recently, the ongoing global war on terror has consolidated their identity formations; though its impact varies from individual to individual. Another research project titled ‘Employment and Social Change Amongst British Asians’, which began in 2003, has sought to explore how labor market positions influence identity formations amongst the different elements making up the grouping. It also gives importance to religious, class and spatial differences amongst the ‘Asian’ grouping where settlers of differing backgrounds are following varied and often sharply contrasting social trajectories.<sup>liii</sup>

#### a. Socio-cultural & Psychological Perspective

During this study, the PIPS research team learned that most British-Pakistanis like British laws. They are also aware that they cannot grow and prosper in British society without adopting British culture. But young Muslims in Britain continue to be stereotypically associated with a range of social problems. British-Pakistani male youth have been identified as consistently underperforming in both the education sector and the labor market.<sup>liv</sup>

Regarding any socio-cultural constraints faced by these British-Pakistanis, 36% of the respondents said they faced no such problem, 38% said they had to cope with some social constraints in Britain while 26% did not reply (see Table 5). However, a majority of the respondents said their social problems might not be attributable to British social norms, but were mainly subjective -- stemming from their socio-cultural mindset and their guarded interaction with British society (see Table 6).<sup>lv</sup>

**Table 5: Do you face any socio-cultural constraints in Britain?**

Total respondents	Yes	No	Did not reply
50	19 (38%)	18 (36%)	13 (26%)

**Table 6: Who is responsible for such constraints?**

Total respondents	British society	Self-imposed limitations	Did not reply
50	12 (24%)	27 (54%)	11 (26%)

## 1. Roots in Native Land/ Culture

The socio-cultural mindset and psychological identity of British-Pakistanis are determined by their roots in the native land, and their religious identity. They have maintained a strong relationship with their native cities over time by actively participating in their economic, social, religious and political activities. All these spheres of life in Mirpur are greatly influenced by these British-Pakistanis. Almost every British-Pakistani from the area has a luxurious house in Mirpur, which is either vacant or inhabited by relatives [see detail in Part-I: Profile of Mirpur]. They maintain a link with Mirpur irrespective of regular visits or not. See Table 7 and 8 for the frequency of their visits to Mirpur and duration of stay there.

**Table 7: How often do you visit Mirpur?**

Total respondents	Once a year	Twice a year	After 2-3 years	Rarely	Settled back in Mirpur	Did not reply
50	14 (28%)	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	10 (20%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)

**Table 8: How long do you stay here?**

Total respondents	More than 2 months	1-2 months	1-2 weeks	Less than a week	Did not reply
50	8 (16%)	20 (40%)	14 (28%)	6 (12%)	2 (4%)

## 2. Generation Gap

The respondents say the old British-Pakistani generations deemed the new generation was deviating to varying degrees from their ancestors' socio-cultural norms and values. As many as 48% of British-Pakistanis from Mirpur were not happy over their children adopting British socio-cultural norms whereas 18% said it was natural for them. A big percentage of these British-Pakistanis (34%) did not answer this question (see Table 9). An almost identical numbers of respondents (32%) avoided answering when asked if they had retained their socio-cultural norms and values themselves. This may refer to an ambiguity or psychological conflict regarding the two sets of norms and values.

Fifty-six percent respondents said they had retained their norms while 12% said they had not been able to (see Table 10). No one said that he did not want to retain his native socio-cultural norms or adopted British culture willingly.

**Table 9: The old generation's acceptance of the new generation adopting British socio-cultural norms.**

Total respondents	Accept	Do not accept	Did not reply
50	9 (18%)	24 (48%)	17 (34%)

**Table 10: The old generation's retention of native socio-cultural norms.**

Total respondents	Retained	Could not retain	Did not reply
50	28 (56%)	6 (12%)	16 (32%)

The new generation's thoughts have been polarized by two key social paradigms i.e. the British social setup and pressure from their ancestors. They see the British people, and other Asians who are well-established due to their hard work and conformity with British social values, enjoying a luxurious life. This has caused a grave mental conflict between the new and old generation of British-Pakistanis. They are divided between home, school, mosque and peer groups. Today in Britain, both parents and children are growing worried. Parents advising their children to study, or shun bad company is useful, but the children growing up in British society, face British cultural reflections all the time. TV, satellite, and movies drag them towards British culture, whereas their ancestral culture and religion is trying to keep them away from adopting western culture.<sup>lvi</sup>

### 3. Discrimination

According to PIPS findings, British-Pakistanis did not consider racial discrimination a major disturbing element. The majority (54%) said there was no racial discrimination in British society, 34% confirmed racial discrimination whereas 12% did not reply (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Do British-Pakistanis feel any racial discrimination in Britain?**

Total respondents	Yes	No	Did not reply
50	17 (34%)	27 (54%)	6 (12%)

However, some British-Pakistanis argued that the trend of social seclusion among Muslims was increasing due to their 'treatment as second-rated citizens'. They felt compelled to live in certain specific areas and send their children to their community schools. They were trying to save their identity.

“If our children burn the British flag on Birmingham roads or march with Pakistani flags, it obviously provokes hatred but it is basically because this society contains a lot of racial discrimination and our youngsters are not treated equally; they do not get the same facilities. When a Muslim and a British graduate together, the Muslim graduate has to appear in five more interviews to get a job as compared to the British graduate and even then they do not get jobs and are asked to improve their qualification. In such circumstances, parents persuade their sons to drive taxis. Our PhD boys are driving cabs on the roads of Bradford and Birmingham,” narrates Khursheed Ahmed, a British-Pakistani.

Some respondents also observed that “when elder male children do not get jobs, their younger siblings lose interest in education, with many drifting towards terrorist activities and drug trafficking”. Muhammad Tariq,<sup>lvii</sup> a brother of British House of Lords member Lord Nazir Ahmed, said that racial discrimination had grown in Britain particularly after the 9/11 and 7/7 terror attacks. “I have had to face contemptuous conduct many times on account of having a beard,” he said.

#### 4. Role of Media

The print media in Great Britain has also noticed the discrimination, which Britain Muslims are subjected to these days. Some writers have also started highlighting the issue through their writing, for instance, an article published in Guardian newspaper on February 2, 2007, said that the Muslims in UK are facing the same discrimination and difficulties faced by the Jew immigrants many years ago.

Some people also see the British media as discriminating against Muslims. Dr Thomas Reynold says when the British-Pakistani Muslims face any intriguing situation they cannot express their views through the media. This gives many journalists a chance to fabricate stories about them. Such fake Muslim stance reaching the native British fuels a negative perception about them.<sup>lviii</sup>

#### b. Religious Perspective

##### *Religious Trend among British-Pakistanis*

Almost 70% inhabitants of Mirpur are settled abroad, mostly in Britain.<sup>lix</sup> Natives visiting Mirpur from Britain profess great love for Islam and want their children to follow the ‘Islamic path’. They revere and have a strong faith in *sufis* and saints. But some of them told PIPS that they could not compel their children to follow traditional religious practices while living in British society. They also complain that the new generation is less inclined towards religion. Some respondents were of the view that if the new generation was not properly guided it would become weary of British culture and may be inclined towards the pro-violence Islamic sects.<sup>lx</sup>

A Policy Exchange report has found evidence of young Muslims in Britain adopting more radical beliefs on key social and political issues.<sup>lxi</sup> Hizbul Tehreer and al-Muhajiroon are the most popular Islamist radical groups among Muslim youth in Britain. These groups are held responsible for unrest among the unemployed British-Pakistani youth, most of whom are from Mirpur. It is pertinent to mention that six key British-Pakistanis leaders of Hizbul Tehreer are from Mirpur district.<sup>lxii</sup>

However, according to a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report,<sup>lxiii</sup> the vast majority of Muslims in Europe are not involved in radical activities, though vocal fringe communities that advocate terrorism exist. This vast majority of moderate Muslims can be very helpful in ameliorating a situation worsened by extremists and religious clerics. In mid-July 2005, then British prime minister Tony Blair met moderate British Muslim leaders and agreed to set up a taskforce to take measures against extremism.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The PIPS research study supports the CRS report as its interviews during field research found that 64% of British-Pakistanis from Mirpur have moderate religious trends; only 16% showed radical tendencies and 20% did not respond (see Table 12). But even those holding moderate views confirmed that a new breed of radical clerics was sowing the seeds of radicalization among the British-Pakistani youth.

**Table 12: Religious Trends among British-Pakistanis**

Total respondents	Moderate trends	Radical trends	Did not reply
50	32 (64%)	8 (16%)	10 (20%)

### 1. Role of Clergy

Many experts say that some European Muslim youth, many of whom are second or third generation Europeans, feel disenfranchised in a society that does not fully accept them; they appear to turn to Islam as a badge of cultural identity and are then radicalized by extremist Muslim clerics.<sup>lxv</sup>

Most of the clerics controlling mosques in Britain come from Muslim countries. Pakistani clergy control almost 1,500 mosques in Britain, and have *imams* (prayer-leaders) and *khateeb*s (the person delivering the sermon) from the Deobandi and Barelvi schools of thought. In a TV interview, Lord Nazir Ahmad pointed out that Muslim leaders from Pakistan visit Britain and give Friday prayer sermons usually in Urdu or Punjabi. The younger British-Pakistani generation does not understand their sermons. Outside mosques, they are at home when they come across eloquent Muslim activists (from Hizbul Tehreer and al-Muhajiroon) who speak in English. These activists distribute literature among youngsters and ask them to visit their offices. And the youngsters showing interest in their ideology become a part of these organizations.<sup>lxvi</sup>

“Actually our *ulema* (clerics) lack education. They can only teach the oral text of Quran. Had they been educated and fluent in English, our children would have learnt more. The brainwashing of young generations regarding radicalization has not been restrained. In this regard the British government should call on and arrange lectures by some of the liberal and enlightened Muslim scholars in the UK,” observed a British-Pakistani, Sufi Muhammad Bashir, during his interview with PIPS.

Another British-Pakistani, Chaudhry Parvez Akhtar, told PIPS: “Some scholars of the Ahle-Hadith school of thought from Saudi Arabia visited Greenland Mosque in Small Heath, Birmingham once and provoked worshippers to damage British society while living there. For instance, a *fatwa* (decree) declared a young British Muslim, who was in the British army and had died while serving in Afghanistan, non-Muslim because he fought against Muslims. The decree said that anyone who died of shots fired by a Muslim was not a Muslim. The Arab Muslim scholars also announced death sentence for homosexuals. They also compelled men to persuade women in their family to wear veil, forcibly if the women did not comply. The new generation is more attracted to Saudi-trained clerics who visit mosques in Britain and deliver lectures in English.”

However, Imran Hussain Chaudhry believed that Britain was the only western country that gave Muslims so much religious freedom. But, he noted, that “some of our imprudent and unwise *mullahs* had exploited this freedom. I have observed that Barelvi *ulema* are not involved in any terrorist or extremist activity but the *ulema* belonging to the Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith schools of thought preach extremism and hatred in their speeches. They are linked to extremist and jihadi organizations in Pakistan.”

## 2. Islamophobia

The seriousness of Islamophobia in modern Britain was first brought to public attention through a report issued by the Runnymede Trust in 1997.<sup>lxvii</sup> The subject needs to be discussed in greater depth to outline the legislative, social and cultural changes required in British society if British Muslims are to feel that they truly belong to British society and their contributions are genuinely recognized.

British-Pakistanis have also seen the recent debate on women wearing the veil in the context of Islamophobia. Nationally, internationally and in Bradford, young women wearing the veil are perceived by the majority ethnic communities as making a particularly strong ethnic statement of identity, which some observers choose to interpret as rejection of ‘British’ values.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Their (British-Pakistanis’) relation to Islam is varied, but seldom non-committal. Just as patriarchy formed the condition and the substantive issues that shaped twentieth century feminism, so, too, Islamophobia has in a real way generated an Islamic sensibility within this cohort of young men that would not have been present in their grandfathers’ generations. The legitimacy of this perspective is something they collectively take for granted. Hoping to swamp it within some revitalized English discourse of social cohesion is naïve. At the same time, and to varying degrees, Islam feeds into the day to day at spiritual, political and practical levels. Coupled with this, the loosening of family authority and the progressive disengagements from ‘homeland’ obligations and cultures is creating a British space in which a wide variety of personal engagements with Islam are thriving. Islam is a normative part of British life.<sup>lxix</sup>

## 3. Roots of Jihad

The roots of jihad in Britain can be traced back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when the US, Britain and other European countries backed the Mujahideen fighting the former USSR. Their all out support provided a golden opportunity for Pakistani pro-jihad religious groups to establish a



support base for the Afghan jihad in America and European countries, mainly Britain, to collect funds. With the Afghan jihad at its peak in the 1980s, Afghan and Pakistani jihadi groups established their presence in Britain to promote jihad. By the end of 1995, major Afghan and Pakistani jihadi groups were running their network in order to raise funds and recruit people in Britain for jihad. Jihadi literature and publications were easily available in Muslim areas of Britain.<sup>lxx</sup>

No comprehensive data about jihadi groups or the involvement of British-Pakistani youth in those groups is available but a few clues, found in the jihadi media publications, indicate that the Muslim community's overall response to the call for jihad was encouraging. The Harkat ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HUJI), once the biggest jihadi group in Pakistan, claimed in 1989 that it was honored to have six martyrs from Britain among its ranks.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Maulana Yusuf Shah, a pro-jihad cleric and secretary of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami group), claimed that a lot of British Muslims were fighting in the Afghan jihad but most of them were associated with Arab groups and very few with Pakistani organizations.<sup>lxxii</sup> Harkat ul-Mujahideen (HM), a Deobandi jihadi organization also claimed having dozens of British Muslim in its ranks. British Mujahideen had attended the annual HM congregation at Jamia Ashrafia, Lahore in 1987 and Maulana Fazal ur-Rehman Khaleel, head of the organization, praised their jihadi services.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Jihadi leaders were also regular visitors to Britain and accounts of their visits can be found in jihadi publications. Religious parties with links to Pakistan had played an important role to promote their activities in Britain.

But the current scenario seems entirely different where most British-Pakistanis do not feel any attachment to or need for active participation in jihad. As many as 96% of British-Pakistanis interviewed by PIPS said they were not affiliated with any jihadi organization and had never donated money for jihad. Only a small proportion (4%) acknowledged some affiliation with jihadi groups and financial support for jihad (see Table 13 and 14).

**Table 13: Respondents' affiliation with jihadi organization(s)**

Total respondents	Yes	No
50	2 (4%)	48 (96%)

**Table 14: Funding for jihad**

Total respondents	Yes	No
50	2 (4%)	48 (96%)

#### 4. Role of Religious Parties/Radical Groups

Though not backing jihad, these British-Pakistanis have not completely detached themselves from religious groups/organizations. Thirty percent of the respondents had affiliation with one or the other religious group or organization (see Table 15).

**Table 15: Affiliation with a religious group/organization**

Total respondents	Yes	No
50	15 (30%)	35 (70%)

A number of religious parties/groups are active in Pakistan and also have networks in Britain with the same agenda and views, causing a spread of their ideologies among the British-Pakistani community. Eight major Pakistani religious parties have their network in Britain and operate a number of subsidiary organizations, charities and religious schools. These parties have links with international Islamic groups and charities, which share a common agenda. Around 150 religious parties and charities are active in Britain, which were established by the British-Pakistani community.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Deobandi politico-religious parties are very active in Britain and British-Pakistanis are a major source of funding for their political, sectarian, jihadi and charity activities. Pakistani *Salafi* movements are also growing rapidly in Britain and have established links with other international groups in Britain like the Muslim Brotherhood. The Markazi Jamiat Ahle-Hadith and its subsidiary groups are mostly active in London and Birmingham.<sup>lxxv</sup>

Although Barelvi Islam is the most popular among the British-Pakistani community, its followers are divided further into 70 groups. Their differences are creating space for radical groups, especially among the youth. Some Barelvi groups support Kashmir-based jihadi groups and collect funds to financially support them.

The Hizbul Tehreer (HT) is a political movement based in Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Central Asia and elsewhere. Its ideology is based on the political theory of the 'caliphate' developed in the 1950s by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, an Islamist ideologue and former Muslim Brotherhood associate. The HT is vigorously opposed in principle to democracy. It is getting popular in Britain despite being banned and kept under strict watch. It is believed that radicalization is one of the major causes of Muslim youth's inclination towards terrorism. The youth, involved in the 7/7 London bombings or other terror plots, do have links with the so-called non-violent Islamic organizations at some level. Connections of the apparently non-violent outfits with Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas and Kashmiri militant organizations hint at the possibility of terrorism in future.

A range of radical tendencies are growing among the British-Pakistani community. They are not all on the same page in terms of specific ideologies, political aims or methods and forms of organization. They can also differ considerably in sectarian terms, specific political goals, and in religious-theological beliefs.<sup>lxxvi</sup> However, the majority of the tendencies mentioned below share some broad themes preached by radical Islamic groups. They include:

1. A 'return' to the *salaf*, which they claim to be the early era of Islam as exemplified by the beliefs and practices of the first generations of Muslims. This typically entails rejecting partially or completely the Islamic historical-legal traditions.
2. A belief in the imposition of *Shariah* upon all Muslims, and the added belief that they know what *Shariah* is, and that their particular version of *Shariah* is the only correct one.
3. A deep sectarianism, especially among the *salafi* tendencies, which often manifests itself in claiming to be able to define who a true Muslim is and who is not.
4. A belief that only clerics can know, define and interpret the will and intention of God.
5. The aim to seriously curtail women's rights, freedoms and liberties, and place women primarily in a domestic and child-rearing role.
6. A deeply conservative and authoritarian view of the family, gender roles and issues of sexuality.
7. An inherently undemocratic worldview, in which minority rights should be diminished or erased.
8. A blinkered belief in jihad, which they primarily define as physical fighting (*qital*), or the use of one's wealth to support physical fighting, in the path of whatever is interpreted to be the way of God.
9. Chauvinism regarding other beliefs, sects and religions.
10. Viewing faith and politics as interlinked and holding that religion is something that should be regularly politicized.
11. The ultimate goal of an Islamic state, enforcing their interpretation of *Shariah*, as the answer to all problems afflicting humanity in general and Muslims in particular.

### 5. Kashmir

Many Pakistani migrants to Britain originally came from Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim region that is divided between Pakistan and India. In Indian-held Kashmir, Muslim groups have been fighting a guerrilla war against Indian rule for years.

British-Pakistanis, of Kashmiri origin especially, and from other parts of Pakistan generally, have strong emotional association with the Kashmir issue. According to field research carried out by PIPS, a majority (64%) of British-Pakistanis from Mirpur back an amicable solution of the issue through dialogue between Pakistan and India, 18% support Pakistan's stance and only 4% favor a solution through jihad (see Table 16).

**Table 16: How should the Kashmir dispute be resolved?**

Total respondents	Politically	By jihad	Support for Pakistan's stance	Did not reply
50	32 (64%)	2 (4%)	9 (18%)	7 (14%)

### c. Political Perspective

The political identity of British-Pakistanis is also divided between their native and host countries. There are two ideological factions of British-Pakistanis in Britain in terms of political beliefs and activities. One favors political participation in state elements, which is marked by their presence in and outstanding contribution to state institutions; whereas the second faction is inclined towards political isolation and feels compelled to lean towards politico-religious parties, religious groups/organizations and clerics, who provoke a radical approach, for a solution of their problems.

Not being a part of mainstream politics, the latter faction is more prone to violent and extremist activities. Peter O'Brien suggests that they (the isolated Muslims) should be given complete civic rights and then asked to adopt liberalism.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

Most British Muslims believe that Muslims in Britain are better off compared to Muslims living in the United States. Regarding any political problems that British-Pakistanis faced in Britain, most of the respondents said that there is complete political freedom and no one was barred from taking part in politics. British-Pakistanis also have opportunities to excel and are given high offices in British political parties they are affiliated with if they play a dynamic and vibrant role. One has to spare time to achieve a distinguished place in politics there, the respondents said. Besides British political parties, all Pakistani parties also have their chapters in Britain therefore British-Pakistanis are facing political division and dispersion.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

#### *Role of Pakistani Immigrants in British Politics*

British-Pakistanis take part in politics from the local to the national level in Britain. They are affiliated with Labour Party, Conservative Party and Tory Party. Labour Party is more popular among them. British-Pakistani political activists told PIPS that they entered politics to secure rights for their community and to highlight its grievances. They claim they are trying to integrate Pakistani settlers in the host community. They stress the need for active participation of their community in British politics to advance and grow in society. Almost 56% of the respondents said they were affiliated with some political party in Britain (mostly Labour Party), 34% replied negatively, while 10% did not answer the question (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Affiliation with a British political party.**

Total respondents	Yes	No	Did not reply
50	28 (56%)	17 (34%)	5 (10%)

Muhammad Sarwar, a British-Pakistani, was the first Muslim leader elected to British parliament in 1997 from Glasgow. In the last elections, three Pakistani expatriates, Khalid Mahmood, Shahid Malik and Sadiq Khan, were elected to parliament, while Nazir Ahmad, who hails from Mirpur, has been elected as a life member of the House of Lords. A number of Pakistani expatriates are elected as local council members as well as mayors in areas where the Pakistani population dominates. There are almost a dozen Pakistani and Kashmiri councilors in Bradford's local council. Muhammad Ajayeb, a British-Pakistani, was elected as lord mayor of Bradford in 1985.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

A trend of isolation and retreat was witnessed among British-Pakistani political activists after the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. Mr Muhammad Tariq is affiliated with Labour Party in Britain and participates in its political activities. He says, "I have been quite active in politics but my political interest has waned since 9/11 as Muslims are not trusted after this incident and are viewed with suspicion everywhere. Prior to 9/11, I served in the District Central Committee, Minority Committee, local police, governing body and different other regional committees."

### *Link with Native Politics*

As many as 46% British-Pakistanis from Mirpur said they were affiliated with some political party in Pakistan, 42% said they were not, whereas 12% did not comment on their political affiliation (see Table 18). All the major political parties of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir have their offices in Britain, but are not politically active there. Their activists are more interested in Pakistani politics. Bradford is the favorite place for Pakistani politicians during their visits to Britain.<sup>lxxx</sup> The politics in Pakistan revolves around castes and clans. For representatives of Pakistani parties in Britain, the clan's chief is more important than the party. Leaders of political parties in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir respect British-Pakistani activists in view of their financial position instead of their performance.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

**Table 18: British-Pakistanis affiliation with a political party in Pakistan.**

Total respondents	Yes	No	Did not reply
50	23 (46%)	21 (42%)	6 (12%)

### **d. Economic Perspective**

A recent study conducted by Ethnic Research Network, a Britain-based institute, shows that people from Pakistani background are more likely to be self-employed than any other ethnic minority group (including white British). In 2001-02, around one-fifth of British-Pakistanis (22%) were self-employed. One out of six men is a driver, working either as a cab driver or a chauffeur.<sup>lxxxii</sup> The PIPS study found that 66% of the respondents were self-employed, 24% held private jobs, 6% had government jobs and 4% were retired (see Table 19). A significantly low number of British-Pakistanis in government jobs or at senior positions in private jobs shows they lag behind mainstream British society. This factor has also played a key role in identity formations of these British-Pakistanis.

**Table 19: Professions of British-Pakistanis.**

Total respondents	Self-employed	Private jobs	Government jobs	Retired
50	33 (66%)	12 (24%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)

Despite this trend of self employment among the Pakistani community, recent statistics from the Department for Work and Pension show that Pakistani communities in Britain are severally affected by poverty and unemployment. British-Pakistanis along with Bengalis, top the list of low income communities in Britain, with 60 percent living with low income.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

In the early years of their presence in Britain, Pakistani manual workers fulfilled the labor shortage that resulted from World War II.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Then with the passage of time most of them started businesses requiring small investments, such as garments shops, taxi driving, video shops dealing in Indian and Pakistani movies, restaurants serving Pakistani food and property dealing. Due to their low income, British-Pakistanis heavily depend on Social Security benefits from the British government.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

### Conclusion

British-Pakistanis are lagging far behind mainstream British society in almost all aspects of life. Secondly, they have maintained strong links with the socio-cultural, religious and political norms and values of their native lands. These two factors have played a key role in formations of their socio-cultural identities. Their new generations are also facing a grave conflict evolving out of different social mirrors like home, peer group, mosque and school. Lack of opportunities due to their poor education and professional skills is also adding to their confusion. Young generations of British-Pakistanis are suffering from social dichotomy, political seclusion and generation gap. At the same time they are getting more radical than their parents, probably in search of an identity.

The visiting British Pakistanis expressed dissatisfaction with the clerics sent from Pakistan and thought that *imams* and *khateeb*s more suited to British-Pakistani social environment should be chosen. Combating Islamophobia does not, of course, mean that all aspects of Islam are beyond criticism. All religious views, as also all non-religious views, need to be discussed and debated, and disagreements need to be aired. It is important, however, that disagreements should be respectful and informed. The majority of British-Pakistanis are moderate Muslims and the situation can greatly improve if attention is paid to their problems.

There are some radical elements amongst Muslims also, some of whom might support violent actions where such actions have no place, or worse, engage in the glorification of death. There has to be a concerted effort to study the situational determinants of radicalized behavior of young Muslims as well to contain this phenomenon. There is a need to adopt a realistic and proactive approach to integrate these British-Pakistanis into British society's mainstream, removing the root causes of radicalization and extremism instead of merely exposing and highlighting them.

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- <sup>i</sup> I want to express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Mujtaba Rathore (a PIPS researcher), Miss Fatima Talib (an ex-member of PIPS team) and Mr. Nawaz Kharal whose office and field works have been so precious in conducting this research.
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- <sup>iv</sup> Ethnic Research Network, <http://www.mrs.org.uk/networking/ern/nl/2/facts.htm>
- <sup>v</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>vi</sup> Irna Imran and Tim Smith, *Home from Home, British Pakistanis in Mirpur*, Introduction, p. 6
- <sup>vii</sup> Population Census 1998, Government of Pakistan.
- <sup>viii</sup> Assad Muhammad Saeed, “Jammu Kashmir: Book of Knowledge”, new edition, National Institute of Kashmir Studies, Mirpur, p. 188.
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid
- <sup>x</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xi</sup> Assad, p. 186.
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibid, p. 188.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Nizami, p. 271.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Assad, pp. 42-51.
- <sup>xv</sup> Ibid, pp. 45-47.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ali Sultan, p. 35.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibid, p. 38.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ibid, p. 37.
- <sup>xix</sup> Ibid, p. 94.
- <sup>xx</sup> Irna Imran, p. 6.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Nizami, p. 270.

- xxii Chaudhry Parvez Akhtar, community leader from Birmingham, interview in Mirpur, February 2007.
- xxiii *ibid*
- xxiv Ayub Muslim, Jamaat-e-Islami leader from Mirpur, interview, February 2007
- xxv Nizami, p. 267.
- xxvi *Ibid*, p. 262.
- xxvii *Ibid*, p. 268.
- xxviii Iqbal Khizar, Chapter 5; Ali Sultan, p. 79.
- xxix Nizami, p. 269.
- xxx Ali Sultan, pp. 63, 68.
- xxxi PIPS field research.
- xxxii PIPS Database.
- xxxiii PIPS interview with Sahibzada Zulfiqar Ahmed, president People's Youth Organization.
- xxxiv Jamaat ud-Da'awa does not contest elections but is emerging on the political front as a religious party advocating the revival of the Islamic caliphate.
- xxxv PIPS Database on madrassas.
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- xxxvii Ethnic Research Network, <http://www.mrs.org.uk/networking/ern/nl/2/facts.htm>
- xxxviii Irna Imran, p. 6.
- xxxix Irna Imran, p. 8.
- xl Nizami, p. 213.
- xli *Ibid*, p. 169.
- xlii *Ibid*, p. 393.
- xliii PIPS interview with Chaudhry Parvez Akhtar, a British-Pakistani from Mirpur.
- xliv The Telegraph, November 16, 2005.
- xlv Nizami, pp. 317-352.



xlvi Ibid, pp.387-388

xlvi Ibid.

xlviiii Weekly *Azam*, 18-24 February 2007

xlviix Sir Cyril Taylor, chairman of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, “Muslim mums told to speak English at home,” *Telegraph*, January 14, 2007.

l Ibid.

li Interview with a British-Pakistani, Kareem Sajjad, monthly *Mashriq-o-Maghrib*, March 2007.

lii The research took place between January 2004 and September 2005. The 25 participants were aged between 16 and 38. All were living and working in various neighborhoods across Bradford. After spending considerable time establishing connections and trust, the researcher formally interviewed the men using unstructured and semi-structured techniques.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/KNOWLEDGE/findings/socialpolicy/1960.asp>

liii <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/4/ramji.html>.

liiv [Modood et al 1997](#); [Brown, 2000](#); [Dale, 2002](#); [PIU, 2002](#).

<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/4/ramji.html#brown2000#brown2000>

liv To quote some, Haji Hukam Daad Said, “There is no social problem in Britain. We are to blame for whatever problems there are. No doubt, there are problems as far as marriages of children are concerned but the British government is not liable for that.” Chaudhry Saeed Akhtar said though the liberal environment had spoilt their children yet they did not have any social problem there. Mr Tariq pointed out that the main problem being faced by Muslim women in the UK was the veil issue. “The veil issue tops the social problems in the UK. Just as there is a freedom to not cover one’s face, there should also be freedom to veil one’s face. The right of women to cover their faces, if they so desire, should be recognized but is being denied.”

lvi PIPS interviews with British-Pakistanis.

lvii PIPS interview with Muhammad Tariq.

lviii Weekly *Azam*, 18-24 February 2007.

lix Assad, p. 186.

lx Interviews with British-Pakistani community leaders, compiled by PIPS.

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- lxxxi Field research, interviews.
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- lxxxiv Nizami, p. 177.

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