Naoroji spent fifty-one years in Britain, most of which were devoted to the Indian cause. Before standing for parliament he was a businessman dealing in cotton, but his life's main aim was always to fight for more rights for his fellow countrymen and women. Among the many achievements that can be attributed to his unflagging efforts was the incorporation of Indians to the Indian Civil Service, which before Naoroji intervened, was virtually closed to them because the entrance examination was held in London.

After an extremely long personal campaign, ridden with numerous obstacles, racism being the main one, Naoroji was chosen as Liberal candidate for Central Finsbury. He had promised to represent the constituency first and India second, which he did. Not only was he the sole voice representing 250 million Indians, but he also worked hard for the people of Finsbury and also espoused other causes, Irish Home Rule being the principal one. Many Indian nationalists took great interest in the Irish Home Rule Movement seeing a parallel between their situations and thinking that Indian support for their cause would be corresponded by Irish solidarity for India, but Charles Stewart Parnell and his followers did not respond as expected. (Visram, 1986:77-8)

Naoroji became famous 'overnight' owing to a rather unfortunate remark made by the Conservative Prime Minister of the time, Lord Salisbury, who declared that

"however great the progress of mankind has been, and however far we have advanced in overcoming prejudices, I doubt if we have yet got to the point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man." (Quoted in Visram & Dewjee, 1984:10)

The speech was widely reported in the press and, ironically, helped Naoroji in his political career. The Liberal party made an issue out of the words 'black man' bearing in mind the Indian's particularly pale complexion. Even when he was finally elected, by a very narrow majority of three, the sentiment behind Lord Salisbury's words would be revived. St. Stephen's Review declared that

"Central Finsbury should be ashamed of itself at having publicly confessed that there was not in the whole of the Division an Englishman, a Scotchman, a Welshman, or an Irishman as worthy of their vote as this fire-worshipper [Naoroji was a Parsee] from Bombay" (ibid.,11)

Towards the end of his life, this 'Grand Old Man of India'[7] gradually moved towards the left in his political views, but he never lost faith in basic British fairness and honour. In his old age he made friends with the British socialist H.M. Hyndman (Fryer, 1989:264) who may have influenced the tone of his denunciations of British

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[7] This is the title of a biography of Naoroji by R.P.Masani (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939)

imperialism, which became considerably stronger without ever becoming downright radical. The nearest he would ever reach was in 1904 when, as a guest of honour at the International Socialist Congress in Amsterdam, he denounced the barbaric way the British Government was treating India. He appealed to the British people to remedy the situation. (Chandan, 1986:24)

Naoroji had founded the London Indian Society in 1865 together with another moderate Indian, Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee. Bonnerjee studied law in Britain and was the second Indian to be called to the Bar, the first being Monmohon Ghose who beat him by a few months in 1868. (Fryer, 1989:265) Unlike Naoroji, Bonnerjee was an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate but deserves to be remembered among the early Indian settlers in Britain for being the first president of the Indian National Congress, which met for the first time in Bombay in December 1885. (Watson, 1979:147) It was believed that the important work of Congress had to be done in England not in India and great efforts were made by leading members to become elected members of the British Parliament. The second Asian, or non-white for that matter, to be elected Member of Parliament was Mancherjee Bhownaggree, who represented Bethnal Green Northeast for the Conservative Party from 1895 to 1906.. Like Naoroji, Bhownaggree was a Parsee but

he was definitely pro-British and anti anything which smelled of 'agitation'. He was a rich man staunchly supported by the Tories, who used him to counteract the rising popularity of his fellow Asian but political rival, Naoroji. (Visram, 1986:92-7)[8]

The political awakening of the Muslims in India was due in part to the work of Syed Ameer Ali, former Judge of the High Court of Calcutta, who retired and settled permanently in England. Ameer Ali, who became the first Indian Privy Councillor in England, (ibid.) may be considered the last of the older generation of Indian nationalists, still very western in their outlook. These first native voices sought reform rather than revolution, as opposed to the new generation, who would not be fobbed off with the excuse that the bulk of the Indian community were still not ready for self-government. The second wave of Asians in Britain would, in their majority, no longer believe in the myth of 'oriental stagnation', which had been cultivated for so long and so carefully by the white

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[8] A comparison between the obituaries of these two prominent Indians reflects current opinions of British subject peoples. The Times wrote of Naoroji that "the Indian member's lack of mental adaptation and narrowness of view stood in the way of his making any distinct mark." (3 July 1917), whereas Bhownaggree spoke "from the standpoint of a sound imperialist, averse to changes for which he did not believe his country to be ripe." (15 November 1933)

man "to ease his own conscience as he enjoyed the perquisites of power." (Metcalf, 1965:326) The students and intellectuals of the early twentieth century did not stop at reform but instead wished to rid India of foreign rule once and for all.

3.2.2. Radicals.

The more authoritarian British rule in India became, the more radical Indian nationalists grew. The 1905 partition of Bengal was seen by the Indian National Congress to be a deliberate attack on Indian union. Lord Curzon, the viceroy who had ordered the partition, failed to understand the ardent reaction provoked by what he believed to be a "sensible administrative operation" (Watson, 1979:150)[9] Certainly the ill feeling generated by the partition of Bengal, which had been carried out without consulting Indian interests, was the most militant phase of political unrest since the 1857 Uprising. That historic year saw the birth of one of the 'new' Indians,

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[9] The partition of Bengal was revoked a few years after Curzon's resignation in October 1905. Ironically, the Indians themselves would divide up Bengal in 1947 in order to separate Hindus (West Bengal) from Muslims (East Pakistan, later Bangladesh)

Shyamaji Krishnavarma, a passionate anti-imperialist, who believed that Britain would only quit India by force, the "jewel in the crown" being far too profitable to abandon through choice. Krishnavarma founded the Indian Home Rule Society in 1905. The society's headquarters were a meeting place for young politically-minded Indians, who, among other things, could learn how to make a bomb. (Fryer, 1989:267; Chandan, 1986:24) Krishnavarma was inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1905 and believed in the need for armed struggle against British occupation. He recruited most of his followers from the small student population. In the first decade of the twentieth century there were approximately one hundred Indian students in Britain, half of whom were in London. (Visram,1986:104 & 178) The authorities began to realize that they posed a serious threat to the British Raj both in India as well as in Britain. (ibid., 107; Fryer, 1989:267) Until then, the British government had tolerated any native Indian political movements, such as the National Congress, in the same spirit that a benevolent teacher might smile patronisingly at his/her pupils' debating society. When the Congress had developed into a great political institution exerting enormous influence on educated sectors of Indian society, it was already too late to quell it.

Many of the supporters of the India Home Rule Society became ardent revolutionaries, but perhaps the most outstanding member was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. This man took over from Krishnavarma as head of India House, the Highgate headquarters of the Society, when the latter abandoned Britain when his presence started to become rather too oppressive for the authorities. Savarkar played an active part in the assassination of Sir William Curzon Wyllie, an official in charge of keeping tracks on the activities of Indian students in Britain. Wyllie was shot dead by a young student called Madan Lal Dhingra during the annual meeting of the National Indian Association. Dhingra was arrested and hanged for his crime on 18 August 1909 (Visram, 1986:108) but he left a written statement explaining the motive for his violent act. Although the police denied the existence of such a statement, Savarkar, who had another copy, had it published in the Daily News (18 August 1909) the same day of Dhingra's execution.

"I attempted to shed English blood as an humble revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths... I believe that a nation held down by foreign bayonet is in a perpetual state of war. Since open battle is rendered impossible to a disarmed race I attacked by surprise... As a Hindoo I felt that wrong to my country is an insult to God."
(Quoted in Fryer, 1989:269)

The police did not hesitate to close down India House and arrest Savarkar. He was sent to India for trial where he was sentenced to transportation for life. Although he could no longer take an active part in Indian politics, Savarkar would be revered as a hero in the fight for freedom. (Chandan, 1976:25)

Having learnt their lesson from the Wyllie affair, the British Government clamped down on Indian revolutionaries and the movement practically died out with World War I. Of the three leading Indian nationalists who visited Britain before or just after the Great War, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gokhale was the most moderate. He was never a permanent resident in Britain but he made seven 'political pilgrimages' to the country, between 1897 and 1914, (Fryer, 1989:270) during which he received great support from the Liberal Party. Gokhale came as a representative of the Congress, which after 1905 had begun to adopt the aim of self-government within the British Empire. (Watson, 1979:150) He was certainly not one of the extremists within the Congress, his language was invariably calm and unruffled as when he spoke of the administration of India as being "unworthy of free England" (Quoted in Fryer, 1989:270) and, at times, almost resigned,

"Our ... talents must gradually disappear owing to sheer disuse ... our lot, as hewers of wood and drawers of water in our own country, is stereotyped." (Quoted in Besant, 1917:35)

Much more radical were his two compatriots, Pal and Tilak, who found their allies in left-wing circles. In 1910 Pal, a former theology student in Britain, was a guest at the annual conference of the Independent Labour Party, (Fryer, 1989:271; Chandan, 1986:25) where he was received enthusiastically by the delegates. Pal acknowledged their solidarity but was pessimistic about bringing about real democratic reforms in India through peaceful means. His views were shared by Tilak, 'the Father of Indian unrest',[10] a great friend of Keir Hardie, the newly-formed Labour Party's first elected Member of Parliament. Having served a prison sentence in his own country for subversive activities, Tilak visited England in 1918. He not only addressed middle-class audiences, but also spoke to working-class organizations and published widely in the Daily Herald during the following two years. (Fryer, 1989:271-2) Tilak's visit helped to put India firmly on the agenda of the Labour Party, possibly due to both the great friendship he cultivated with George Lansbury, the editor of the Daily Herald, Ramsay MacDonald and George

[10] This is taken from the title of a biography of Tilak Lokamanya Tilak: Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India by D.V. Tahmankar (John Murray, 1956).

Bernard Shaw, among other socialist sympathizers and his own talents as an eloquent speaker.

Men like Tilak or Pal were doing far more than simply gently nudging the British Government out of its imperial apathy, as Roy and Naoroji, or even Gokhale, had done. They were delivering a sharp poke in the ribs in their untiring efforts to awaken the ruling power to the injustices of British administration in India. Before 1919, however, Indian nationalists could still be divided into two camps: the extremists, who cried out for Home Rule, or *Purna Swaraj* (full independence) and the moderates, sometimes more concerned with subduing their own radicals than demanding more rights from their imperial masters. 1919, and in particular, 13th April, constitutes the second of the great turning-points in Anglo-Indian relations, the first being the 1857 Uprising, namely, the Amritsar massacre, the exact details of which were not fully reported to the British public until nine months after the event occurred. The Times reported that "It was **vaguely** known that very severe measures were taken at Amritsar". (16 December 1919; emphasis mine) In all fairness it must be remembered that India was seven thousand miles away and that happenings in the subcontinent were often not heard of for several months. Allowances made, in comparison with the uproar caused by

the Mutiny, the incidences of which were reported in the British press with remarkable alacrity,[11] very few protesting voices were heard in Britain concerning the ten minute firing on an unarmed crowd. Certainly nobody questioned General Dyer's reaction until the proceedings of the Hunter Committee appointed to investigate the disturbances were disclosed, nine months after the death of the 415 victims of Jallianwala Bagh. The tragedy of Amritsar was the final straw for many of the more restrained members of the Congress Party. Many, in fact, dated their conversion to the anti-British cause from 13th April 1919, although "perhaps it only crystallised doubts and antagonisms which were already present in their

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[11] The Indian Mutiny officially started on 10th May 1857 at Meerut, when 85 sepoys (Indian soldiers) were freed from prison by their comrades and all set off for Delhi in order to reestablish the Mughal Emperor on the throne. The Cawnpore Massacre, in which several Europeans were cruelly murdered, did not take place until 15th July. It is interesting to note that letters from eyewitnesses describing Indian barbarities were being published regularly from August onwards. As an example of the kind of letter published, the <u>Illustrated London News</u> printed the following on August 29th:
"No European man, woman, or child has had the slightest mercy shown them. I do not believe that the world ever witnessed more hellish torments than have been afflicted on our poor fellow-countrymen [such as] cutting off the fingers and toes of little children, joint by joint, in sight of their parents, who were reserved for similar treatment afterwards."

minds." (Chamberlain, 1974:201) The significance of the incident lay not so much in the large number of people slaughtered at Amritsar, but rather in the generalized assumption that Indians belonged to an inferior race and thus could be and **should** be treated accordingly. The events leading up to and immediately following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre play such an important role, to my mind, in Indian feeling towards Britain and, moreover, contrast so vividly with British feeling towards India and Indians after the Mutiny, that a brief summary of this regrettable episode in the history of the British Raj is added.

3.2.3. Amritsar 1919.

Until Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914 the two main political parties of the time, Conservatives and Liberals, were deeply divided over the issue. Whilst the former favoured war, the latter wished to remain neutral. Despite this initial wavering of the mother country, the Empire rallied round and provided support for the cause. The self-governing Dominions voluntarily contributed soldiers and materials to the allied war effort, while India, still a colony under

British administration, had no choice but to stand by and watch her soldiers being shipped off to European battlefields. An army of 1.5 million Indians fought for the King-Emperor, "most of them volunteering for the money or the honour, but many out of loyalty too." (Morris, 1982c:199) During the war, the ranks of the Indian Army swelled to such an extent that it became the "largest volunteer professional army in history". (Allen, 1992:229) Moreover, India raised three war loans and contributed £100,000,000 to the cost of the war. (Huttenback, 1975:175) When the allies finally triumphed, thanks in part to the sacrifice of India, [12] many Indian nationalists believed that Britain would have no alternative but to grant them the right to rule their own country. However, the conclusion of World War I did not bring about the end of repression, instead, the Armistice seemed to increase it. During the war the Defence of India Act had been passed to deal with military emergencies and conspiracies against the State: anybody suspected of anti-imperial propaganda could be imprisoned without a trial. The rising revolutionary movement, which had been carefully watched in Britain since the assassination of Wyllie, had to be controlled and the

[12] Over 62,000 Indians lost their lives fighting for the Empire. (Saggar, 1992:36)

government could see no other way to do it. When the war ended, logically the Defence of India Act should have ceased to exist, there being no outside threat any more. Of course, it was the **inside** threat which perturbed the peace of the Raj. "Something had to be concocted to retain these powers", (Horniman, 1920:49) thus the Rowlatt Committee was appointed to report on revolutionary crime in India. Sir Sidney Rowlatt and his team of judges, two of whom were Indians,[13] finding enough sedition in the air, saw fit to recommend the introduction of

"drastic legislation, depriving people of their most elementary human rights and unparalleled in the laws of any modern civilized State." (ibid.)

By the Rowlatt Acts, as they were known, anybody caught possessing a seditious document would be imprisoned or fined unless s/he could prove that the document was to be used for a lawful purpose. People could be tried without a jury; proof of any previous conviction could be admitted as evidence; the physical presence of witnesses was not deemed necessary in court, whereas their evidence would be taken into account; arrests and searches could be carried out without the necessity of a warrant and any suspicion,

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[13] Perhaps E.M.Forster was thinking of these Indian judges when he made Ronny Heaslop's assistant, Das, the magistrate in charge of Adela Quested's case in A Passage to India. The reason given was that "Conviction was inevitable; so better let an Indian pronounce it, there would be less fuss in the long run" (Forster, 1985:199)

however remote, of complicity in an anarchical or revolutionary movement meant severe restrictions of personal liberty, or even confinement in a specially designed part of the prison. (ibid.,62)

The British firmly believed in the submissiveness of the Indian population (see chapter 5), but however docile and unresisting they might have really been, such dictatorial measures could not but provoke them into rebellion. Only a few months previously many Indians had fought on the same side as the people who were now determined to deprive their fellow British subjects, of freedom of speech, movement and even thought.[14]

The viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and his government must have realized how far they were pushing the Indians, but they appeared to be

"set upon showing the Indian people that the war-won freedom was not for them, that Government in India was still, and would remain, an autocracy, unrepresentative of the people, able to ride roughshod over their protests and to rob them, if it so willed, of the liberties and rights solemnly guaranteed to them in the proclamations of three successive sovereigns." (ibid.,67)

On April 10th 1919 two prominent leaders, Dr. Kitchla and Mr. Satyapal, were arrested, (Wolpert, 1982:298) or,

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[14] Ironically, Mohandas Gandhi, who had spent twenty years struggling for the rights of Indians in South Africa, was a staunch supporter of the British war effort and recruited for the Indian army. (Huttenback, 1975:142)

according to The Times "were unostentatiously deported from the city [Amritsar]" (15 December 1919). As a result, a small number of peaceful demonstrators proceeded to the home of the Deputy Commissioner to "plead for the release of the prisoners." Before they could reach their destination, they were shot at by troops and some were killed. (Horniman, 1920:69-71) The Times referred to this preliminary incident as "a mob attack[ing] a military picket",(15 December 1919). Whatever it was, the Government used the event as proof that there was a revolt afoot. It cannot be denied that there was destruction of property, and that a missionary lady, Miss Sherwood, was assaulted "and left for dead" (The Times, December 16th) The riots became so serious that Brigadier-General Dyer took control from the civil authorities and restored order. Two whole days would elapse before the actual massacre took place, during which time relative peace reigned in the city. Not even at the burials of the victims who had been killed on April 10th were there any further outbreaks of violence. The morning of April 13th, General Dyer had a proclamation read at several parts of the city warning people against assembling together at risk of being dispersed by force of arms. That afternoon some 10,000 men, women and children, many from neighbouring villages where the ban had not been

read, gathered in a walled field, known as Jallianwala Bagh [garden] to celebrate a Hindu festival. (Wolpert, 1982:299) Dyer would insist that it was a seditious assembly, but he had taken no steps to prevent it although he had known about it since the morning. (Horniman, 1920:72) The general proceeded with an armed force to the Bagh and opened fire without warning, "within 30 seconds of his arrival" (The Times, 15 December), ordering the fire to be directed where the crowd was thickest. The firing lasted for ten minutes until all the ammunition was exhausted, 1,650 rounds. Over four hundred people were killed and three times that number wounded. The Bagh was an enclosed garden with very narrow entrances, which prevented Dyer from taking his machine guns in, but which also stopped any members of the crowd from escaping the barrage of fire. As if that was not enough, no attempt was made by Dyer or his men to attend to the wounded. Dyer did not consider this to be his "job" because "hospitals were open, and they could have gone there" (Quoted in The Times 15 December). What Dyer seemed to forget is that thanks to his curfew order, people could not and dared not venture out after eight in the evening, so the dead lay rotting and the wounded in agony until the following morning. (Horniman, 1920:72)

Edward Thompson, whose book The Other Side of the Medal aims to deal objectively with such "travesties of events in history books" (Thompson,1925:27) as the Indian Mutiny, grants Dyer somewhat more than the benefit of the doubt. He acknowledges the general's position to have been "terribly difficult", that "the unrest had got out of hand". He even doubts the peaceful nature of the Jallianwala Bagh gathering,

> "Nor was [it] by any means a peaceful meeting for discussion; nor was it unarmed, except in the sense that there were no firearms. Many of the mob carried *lathis*, the clubs that are the traditional weapon of Indian peasants, with which they had now been murdering people." (ibid.,94)

For Thompson, Dyer had shown "courage and honesty" (ibid.,95) and almost suggests that it was the skeletons in the imperial cupboard (British revenge for the Cawnpore and Jhansi massacres) that drove him to such drastic and unnecessary lengths. Thompson was writing only five years after the events had been disclosed. Possibly it was still too recent to put it into its right perspective. In the words of Salman Rushdie, he was too near the cinema screen to see the actors' faces properly.[15]

What followed on from the massacre was almost worse. Six weeks of Martial Law, during which "wholesale

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[15] See Midnight's Children, (Picador, 1981) p. 165-6.

shooting of unarmed people in other parts of the Punjab" was carried out, (Horniman, 1920:72) the city's water and electricity supply was cut off, (Singh, 1977:165) which, together with Dyer's crawling order, alienated almost all Indians, including the staunchest British supporters, the Sikhs. General Dyer ordered all Indians passing along the street where Miss Sherwood, the missionary, had been "murderously attacked" (The Times, 15 December) to crawl on their bellies. Whether the aggressors of Miss Sherwood, who lived to tell the tale, were humiliated by this 'punishment' was not recorded. Neither was it mentioned that the lady in question had been succoured by an Indian family resident in the street. (Horniman, 1920:71)[16] Dyer's intention had been to enforce a punishment "that would meet the assault". (Quoted in The Times, 15 December 1919) Apparently it had never occurred to him that a large number of innocent people, possibly including Miss Sherwood's rescuers, would have been obliged to obey the order.

This incident recalls the generalized belief in the popular imagination of 1857 that all Indians were inhumane brutes lacking any finer feelings. It was then

[16] Miss Sherwood refused the compensation offered to her by the British Government because she owed her rescue to Indians rather than to the British. (Narayanan, 1986:21)

inconceivable that exceptions to the rule could and did exist. The letters of F. Roberts, which describe the events of that year in vivid, emotive language, contain many conspicuous contradictions as regards the nature of the Indians. He refers to them all as "blackguards" although he concedes that some are "tolerable monsters" (Roberts, 1924:16). In another letter they are "these cowardly wretches [who] delight in torturing [women and children]" (ibid.,28). However, whereas he proudly claims that

"I would undergo cheerfully any privation, any amount of work, living in the hopes of a **revenge** on these cruel murderers",

earlier in the same letter he casually mentions that villagers took in some of the people who escaped the firing in the boats at Cawnpore and "gave them shelter for a month, until our troops passed by" (ibid., 44-5; emphasis in original)

The crawling order at Amritsar was revoked on April 21st by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who had previously telegraphed his approbation of General Dyer's action on 13th. The six weeks of Martial Law, administered under Dyer, with the continued approval and cooperation of O'Dwyer, came to be known as "Dyerarchy", coined from the British Government's policy of dyarchy, but which came to be synonymous with

"lawlessness". (Singh, 1977:165) Dyarchy, or dual government, involved a slow increase in the number of Indian ministers and a larger number of elected Indian representatives in the central and provincial legislatures. While the British remained firmly in the driving seat, certain departments being reserved for Britons, Indians were meant to "learn the ropes" about running their country.

As mentioned above, public opinion in Britain was absolutely indifferent to the events in Amritsar. So little had been said at the time [17] that until the conclusions of the Hunter Committee, in which Dyer's dismissal was recommended, were made public, the Amritsar tragedy had passed by virtually unnoticed. The Daily Mail's reticence on the Jallianwala Bagh incident, (in the May 23 edition the headline "The Indian Riots Cost the Lives of 9 Europeans and 400 Indians" is never properly explained) seems attributable to, what The Times of December 16 calls the "studious concealment of relevant

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[17] The Times 15 December attempts to justify this apathy:
"These events were chronicled, **as far as they were made public**, in The Times, and were discussed in leading articles on April 15, 19, and 26" (emphasis mine.) The Daily Mail clearly had its priorities in order when its April 15 headline stated: "Indian Riots. 6 Europeans killed" In the same article we can read that "[the mob] refused to disperse, and it is believed at two places had to be fired upon".

facts" on the part of Mr. Montagu, Secretary for India, who, together with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy,

"in their public statements and in the summaries issued to the press, never made any allusion to what happened in this Amritsar garden".(ibid.)

Naturally, in British India the event was widely reported. It became a subject of discussion among the European community and, logically, between them and the Indians. Some dissenting voices could be heard among the British, who felt that the Raj should be above similar acts of terrorism. An even deeper question lay behind much of the discussion. The age-old race issue submerged again. Were the lives of the 400 Indians massacred in the garden of the same value as those few Europeans who had died in the riots? In other words, had the end (maintenance of the Raj) justified the means (cold-blooded murder)? Many imperialists, not only more left-wing thinkers, felt that Amritsar had been "a ghastly mistake". (Spear, 1961:347)

Dyer had his supporters, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, for one, claimed he had saved the empire. The Morning Post raised a fund for the general. £30,000 were collected, "largely in India" (Thompson, 1925:97) and he was "presented with a golden sword as 'Defender of the Empire' .... from his English admirers." (Singh, 1977:166) One prominent Indian who publicly expressed his disgust at

such lionising was the Nobel prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore, who resigned the knighthood conferred upon him in 1915 as a protest against the enormity of the measures taken by the [British] Government of India:

"[such] badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation." (Quoted in Wolpert,1982:300)

Less illustrious Indians could not make such a public show of contempt but the effect and aftermath of the massacre lived on in their memories. Zerbanoo Gifford describes a Sikh curse which foretold how they would revenge themselves on the British by "colonization in reverse". (Gifford, 1990:19) Although such a curse is a common enough joke among the many wealthy Asian businessmen in Britain today, no reference to its ever having been pronounced by a leading Sikh exists. The curse may be "an unacknowledged, but equally significant, incident in British history" (ibid.) or perhaps owes more to British inventiveness and love of Eastern superstition than to reality, but what cannot be ignored is the strong desire to take revenge for what happened.

Revenge took its time but it finally arrived on 13 March 1940 when Udham Singh shot dead Sir Michael O'Dwyer at a London meeting. A paper found on the assailant with the words "Sir Michael O'Dyer, Sunnybank, Thurston, South Devon" (The Times April 2 1940) suggested the possibility

of a confusion with the man who had ordered the shooting at Amritsar, General Dyer. However, Dyer had died of a natural death in 1927, thus escaping revenge. The debt had to be settled and among the Sikh community, in spite of the many eulogies heaped onto O'Dwyer in the Press, [18] an enemy had been removed. Udham Singh, who was hanged on June 13 1940, was considered a martyr. He is revered even today among members of the Asian community who celebrate an annual sports competition called the "Udham Singh Challenge Cup".[19] Sir Michael O'Dwyer, on the other hand, has faded away from public memory.

As we have seen, the events of 1919 in the Punjab were given very little media coverage in Britain. Neither does the massacre figure as the subject of any British novel. Salman Rushdie describes it very vividly in Midnight's Children (Rushdie, 1981:32-7) but most other British novelists have shunned the incident completely. On the other hand, the Mutiny has been the subject of "at least 47 novels" according to Ralph J. Crane (1992:11) and 83 entries of Mutiny novels are recorded in Brijen K. Gupta's annotated bibliography (1973), in most of which

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[18] See, for example, the obituary in The Times March 14 1940, and Letters to the Editor, March 21, 25 & 26.

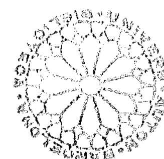
[19] I am grateful to Dr. Roger Ballard for this information.

the British involvement has been invariably glorified. It is almost as though revenge on the victims of Cawnpore and Jhansi could be obtained through literature but, in the case of Amritsar, no such revenge was required by the British. Veiled mentions of the riots can be found in Forster's A Passage to India and Paul Scott has Mabel Layton troubled in her sleep by what her friend Barbie Bachelor interprets as "Gillian Waller". (Scott, 1979) Silence on the part of the British did not alter the fact that Anglo-Indian relations had been dealt "a most grievous blow" (Singh, 1977:166) and the Indians who lived in Britain between the two wars, before Independence, would do so under the shadow of Amritsar.

3.3. The Anti-Raj Vanguard.

Three years after the troubles in the Punjab, another Asian was making a bid for the third Indian voice to be heard in the British Parliament. Shapurji Saklatvala, a Bombay Parsee, won Battersea North for the Labour Party in 1922. An fervent anti-imperialist, he believed the Left in Britain to be the only movement really resolved to end colonial rule. (Visram, 1986:145) He had joined the Independent Labour Party in 1910 and in 1916 formed the Workers' Welfare League of India in London, initially intended for Lascars but extended to cover all Indian workers in Britain. (Fryer, 1989:351; Chandan, 1986:27) Saklatvala gradually moved to the left and in 1924 he became the first and only Asian MP to sit as a Communist and the second member of that party to be elected to the House of Commons. (Visram, 1986:145) Despite his militant attitude and unflagging energy, a sole Indian voice in Parliament could do very little to make the general public realize that Britain's civilizing colonial mission was far from as romantic as they were led to believe. Saklatvala's death in 1936 prevented him from seeing, what he had fought for so ardently, Indian Independence.

In that respect, Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon was more fortunate. He would never become Britain's fourth



Asian Member of Parliament [20] although he was supported by many leading Socialist thinkers, such as Fenner Brockway and Bertrand Russell, in his work in the Commonwealth of India League (founded 1923 and renamed the India League in 1928). The aim of the League, originally founded in 1912 by Mrs. Annie Besant as the Home Rule for India British Auxiliary, (Fryer, 1989:353) was to support India's claim for *swaraj* (self-rule) as opposed to dominion status. Thus Menon played an active role in the negotiations leading to independence, and, in spite of Clement Attlee's opposition, he would serve as India's first High Commissioner in the United Kingdom (Chandan, 1986:27). Up until this appointment in 1947, Menon had been a Labour councillor for the London borough of St. Pancras, where he had performed his duties with the same conscientiousness that had characterized his fellow countryman, Dadabhai Naoroji, forty years earlier.

Needless to say, these radical revolutionaries were by no means the only, although the most vociferous, Indian settlers in Britain before World War II. During the second half of the nineteenth century a growing number of students formed a large part of the Asian community,

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[20] Sixty-five years would have to elapse before this occurred. In 1987 Keith Vaz won Leicester East for the Labour Party.

otherwise made up of mainly Lascars and peddlers (see 3.1. note 6). Most of these young men were sent to Britain by their parents to obtain qualifications, without which they had no hope of entering any profession or the much sought after Indian Civil Service. The first four students from the subcontinent arrived in England in 1845 (Visram, 1986:178), on the eve of the first World War, they numbered approximately 700.

Although it was invariably the sons who were sent abroad for their education, there were a few female Indian students, generally daughters of Zoroastrian Parsee families. Unlike other Indian communities, the Parsees have always encouraged women to achieve success. One such pioneer of female education was Cornelia Sorabji, the first Asian woman to study law at a British university, who was finally, after much effort, called to the Bar in 1923. (Gifford, 1990:31-2)

Indian students at the end of the last century were not greeted with hostility. On the contrary, they were often pleasantly surprised with the hospitality of the indigenous population. Associations and hostels were founded to make these young people feel 'at home' by providing them with social and cultural activities. (Visram, 1986:182). A young Cambridge undergraduate was so impressed by the warmth of the response he received

from the British, both young and old, that he came to the conclusion that "the English in India and the English at home are two entirely different people". The explanation for such devastatingly different behaviour could only be attributable to

"..an innate sense of superiority in the Englishman, which makes him look upon himself as belonging to a race the first in all the world. ... and he becomes more alive to this superiority when he leaves his island home to mix with foreigners. He makes up his mind to stand on the dignity of his race and to assume an unbendable stiffness, so as to show others what he readily is and how far he is above them. But at home, he is himself - natural and genuine." [21]

Satthianadhan's rosy view of British hospitality was probably not shared by the majority of students. Certainly after World War I, and until the introduction of anti-discriminatory legislation in 1965, students did not escape the rebuffs and resentment that their less educated compatriots were obliged to tolerate. Landladies were not bothered about the background of the prospective tenant, the fact that s/he was 'coloured' automatically placed him/her in the same heap with the rest. They personally, of course, never objected to an African or Indian tenant, but 'the other gentlemen' living in the house might. In

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[21] S. Satthianadhan, Four Years in an English University, Together with a Complete Guide to Indian Students Proceeding to Great Britain, Madras: Srinivasa, Varadachari & Co., 1893. (Quoted in Visram, 1986:182; emphasis in original)

the inter-war period, the exclusion of non-whites from dance halls and restaurants was not an uncommon practice. In Edinburgh, the situation had reached such limits by 1927 that Shapurji Saklatvala raised the matter in the House of Commons. Despite his intervention, discrimination on racial grounds continued to operate in many parts of the United Kingdom. (Dunlop & Miles, 1990:160-3)

No doubt, such overt manifestations of hostility were less frequent during the nineteenth century simply because there were fewer blacks and these were scattered over the country, although large numbers of Lascars settled around the seaports, forming ghetto-like communities in places like Liverpool and Cardiff. Major Evans Gordon, Member for Tower Hamlets, Stepney, in a speech on the immigration of destitute aliens, put his finger on the sore spot: it was simply to a question of numbers. The analogy he used to point out the hazards of allowing in any more foreigners, while not aimed at people from, what was then, the coloured British colonies, is worth quoting.

"Ten grains of arsenic in 1,000 loaves would be unnoticeable and perfectly harmless, but the same amount if put into one loaf would kill the whole family that partook of it. In the same way the alien invasion, if spread over the whole kingdom might not be of great consequence. It is the concentration in certain towns and in certain districts of those towns which makes it so disastrous." (Parliamentary Debates, 1902:1274)

The unwanted aliens in 1902 were, in general, Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe. Sixty years later, the baton would have been passed to the former imperial subjects from the subcontinent. Whereas circumstances have changed, the discourse remains the same.

Consequently, a handful of students from overseas could be borne with. They even added a touch of colour to an otherwise monotonous landscape. Such is the impression that emanates from the following description of a typical Sunday morning at Oxford.

"Four proud infidels alone proclaimed their dissent [from church-going]; four Indians from the gates of Balliol, in freshly-laundered white flannels and neatly pressed blazers, with snow-white turbans on their heads, and in their plump, brown hands bright cushions, a picnic basket and the Plays Unpleasant of Bernard Shaw, making for the river." (Waugh, 1987:70-1)

However, sometimes even one solitary 'infidel' could step out of line and make his presence too conspicuous. D.F.Karaka was elected President of the Oxford Union, but the choice of an Indian sparked off a rather racist reaction in the press. It was suggested that "now that an Indian had been made President of the Union, the office was no longer what it was".[22]

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[22] D.F. Karaka, I Go West, Michael Joseph, 1938. Quoted in Visram, 1986:183.

3.4. Pre-War Pioneers.

As mentioned in 3.1., Lascars often had to wait for several months before they could procure a passage on a ship bound for India. During this enforced resting period many simply whiled away the time begging, but other more enterprising individuals were not content to sit back idly waiting for a ship. Some took charge of lodging houses, others worked for circuses, a few even established tea-houses and cafes near the docks. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:23-4) Many of these modest places of refreshment grew quite popular and can be seen as the forerunners of the ubiquitous Indian restaurants of later years.

Another economic activity resorted to by these unemployed seamen was peddling. The main advantage of this means of earning a living, temporary or otherwise, was the lack of opposition from the indigenous working-class population. (Dunlop & Miles, 1990:152) These men were joined in the early 1920s by a small number of Sikhs, professionals in the hawking and peddling trade. They soon became familiar figures in rural areas, armed with a variety of cheap goods which they carried about in a suitcase. They must have sold a great deal as very soon they were joined by, what was at the time, a large number

of fellow Punjabis.[23] At the outbreak of World War II, these peddlers were doing a fair amount of business with less wealthy housewives all over the country, (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:28) although they concentrated mostly in London, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. Again the numbers of these people was starting to alarm the authorities. In an attempt to curb the increase in peddlers, in January 1931 the Foreign Office imposed a ban on aliens entering Britain as students or visitors from taking up employment. (Chandan, 1986:27) These pioneers in the retail trade would gradually become specialized in a certain field. Instead of leading a peripatetic existence, many settled in a particular area and set up a small shop or warehouse. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:29) They would turn out to be valuable bridgeheads for the post-war 'invaders'.

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[23] Before Partition in 1947 Muslims and Sikhs lived alongside one another in an undivided Punjab. After Independence the Sikhs would stay on the Indian side, and the Muslims in the Pakistani Punjab.

3.5. Hooded Hordes.

> *"Who are those hooded hordes swarming*
> *Over endless plains .." (The Waste Land, 369-70)*

3.5.1. Pulled or Pushed?

As we have seen, people from the Indian subcontinent have been resident in Britain for over two hundred years. However, these early pioneers had, as it were, merely reconnoitred the land in preparation for what has been described by many as "the unarmed invasion".[24] Unarmed they certainly were, but the term 'invasion' is highly questionable. An invasion is the action of an army entering a country **by force**, and the thousands of Indians, Pakistanis and Afro-Caribbeans who came to Britain in the fifties and sixties,[25] did so not only because of strained circumstances at home but also in response to the urgent demand for labour in the former mother country.

After the austere years of World War II, the British economy revived. So great was the post-war boom in

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[24] To illustrate the point, this is the title of a book by Lord Elton (Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1965)

[25] It is estimated that between 1955 and 1962, before labour vouchers were introduced (see 4.2.1.), 400,000 migrant workers arrived in Britain from the New Commonwealth. (Miles & Solomos,1987)

industry and in building that very soon there was a desperate shortage of labour. Fear of recession prevented the Labour Government from encouraging foreign workers too openly to come to Britain to fill the vacancies but it was never thought desirable in this initial stage to recruit workers from the Commonwealth, who were nevertheless British citizens. The few West Indians who did arrive before 1951, including the 492 Jamaicans on the *Empire Windrush* mentioned in 3.1., were "soon ... perceived as a 'problem'. " (Miles & Solomos, 1987:88) However, such was the need for manpower that the British Government saw fit to turn to Europe in search of migrant labour.

The European Voluntary Worker Schemes were set up to facilitate the entry into Britain of displaced persons or political refugees, unable or reluctant to return to their country of origin after the war. These workers (EVWs) were admitted under very restrictive conditions so that the Aliens Order of 1920 (see 4.1.2.) was not infringed. Only single people were eligible and if any married couple did volunteer for work, they were inevitably split up and sent to different parts of the country. The EVWs were not allowed to change jobs, but were obliged to remain in the employment the Ministry of Labour had allotted them. Their initial contract was for a year, and renewal was subject to the availability of British workers. They

could be deported for misconduct or ill health[26] and were the first to be made redundant if ever the case should arise. (Foot, 1965:123; Layton-Henry,1984:19; Miles & Solomos, 1987:87-8) All told, they were a very useful source of labour, which could be got rid of very easily and without any fuss. Although Britain recruited some 90,000 EVWs (Castles, et al.,1984:41) there was still a dramatic shortage of labour, in particular in the textile industries, public transport and hospitals. (Layton-Henry, 1984:20; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:12) While it is true that people from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent were never encouraged to come in the same way that the EVWs had been, [27] the labour situation was so grave that any misgivings over the employment of colonial workers were finally overruled. The obvious drawback to resorting to imported labour from the Commonwealth was that, as British subjects, they could not be dispensed with at will. On the other hand, they constituted a cheap source of labour and were willing to do the 'dirty' jobs

[26] By 1950 approximately 600 EVWs had been deported. (Castles & Kosack, 1973:30)

[27] Doubts were privately and publicly expressed about the capacity of British society to absorb immigrants of an alien race and religion even before large numbers of black workers started to arrive. It was thought advisable to discourage any large scale migration from the former colonies. (Layton-Henry, 1984: 20-21; Solomos, 1989:45-6)

that the indigenous population were shunning. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:29-30) In the early days of large-scale immigration from the New Commonwealth, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans tended to be found working predominantly as unskilled labourers in heavy industries or in transport and communications. (Krausz, 1972:95-7)

There was a certain amount of the 'pull factor' involved in the motives for migration to Britain. In the case of the Indians and Pakistanis, news of the prosperity and opportunities available in Britain soon found its way back to the subcontinent, encouraging others to take the plunge. Furthermore, migration was far from being an unknown experience in India and Pakistan, as, in the days of the Raj, Indians had been sent as indentured labour to other parts of the Empire, in particular, East and South Africa and the West Indies. Moreover, internal migration had been something of a tradition, especially in the Punjab, with movements of people from the arid, mountainous parts in the north to the more fertile plains and larger urbanized areas to the south. (Bhachu, 1985: 21-2; Saifullah Khan, 1977:65)

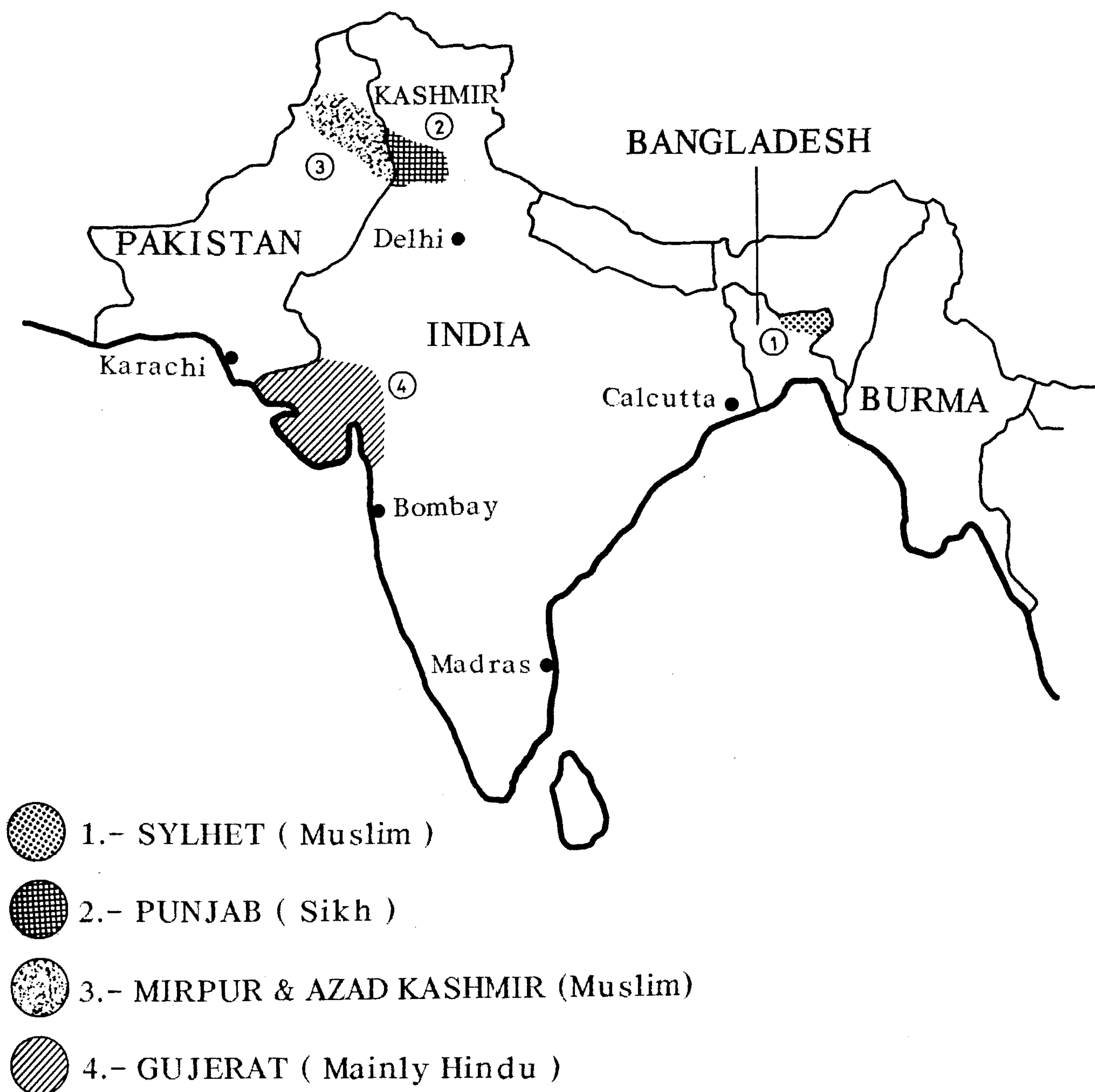
In most processes of voluntary migration, there are pressures acting on the prospective migrant at both ends. The pull factor draws him/her to the host country, usually with prospects of an increased income and higher standard

of living. In his/her home country, the push factors impel him/her to seek these improved conditions elsewhere. In India and Pakistan after Partition, four million Muslims crossed from India into the Pakistani Punjab; a similar number of Sikhs and Hindus moved in the opposite direction. Apart from much bloodshed, these mass exoduses caused an increase in the pressure on the land. Many found themselves without homes or jobs. Emigration to Britain, with all the hazards that might entail, seemed a much more attractive prospect than an uncertain future in a land plagued by famine, floods and poverty, the left-overs of imperial rule.

The post-war Asian migrants in Britain all come from three main areas[28] of the subcontinent: Sylhet, in what is now Bangladesh, Gujerat in India, (between Karachi and Bombay) the Indian Punjab and the Kashmir that lies in Pakistani territory called *Azad* (free) Kashmir (see figure 3.1.). The Mirpur District of Azad Kashmir has supplied the whole of Britain, but in particular Bradford, with a very large number of its people for a rather special reason. Construction of an enormous hydro-electric dam near the town of Jhelum involved the

[28] Even the many Asians who arrived in Britain from East Africa originally emigrated from the Punjab or Gujerat.

THE FOUR MAIN AREAS FROM WHICH THE IMMIGRANTS HAVE COME



SOURCE : Wilson, 1978 (adapted)

Figure 3.1

evacuation of the population in the surrounding area. Approximately 250 Mirpuri villages were submerged and over 100,000 people were moved and either resettled on land in another part of the Punjab or else were compensated for their loss in cash. Some willingly settled down to farming in the new plot, but others decided to go further afield. The construction of Mangla Dam did not cause mass migration to Britain, but it certainly intensified it. Any displaced Mirpuri who had a relative or kinsman already in Britain would have felt drawn to try his luck there. (Murphy, 1987:11; Saifullah Khan, 1977:66-7) Once a tradition of migration is established, it has a snowball effect. The more Pakistanis or Indians that migrated, the more sponsors there were available to welcome the increasing number of newcomers. The snowball gathered in momentum. In 1955 migrants from the subcontinent began to enter Britain in considerable numbers, (Allen, 1971:37) and by the end of 1958 there were already between 50,000 and 55,000 Indians and Pakistanis in Britain. (Fryer, 1989:373; Walvin, 1984:111) At this point it is worth pointing out one of the main differences between the motives impelling mass migration from the Indian subcontinent and from the West Indies, although Asians and Afro-Caribbeans tend to be discussed together in studies of post-war migration. In the case of the former, the

economic consideration was the sole motive for migration. Despite over two hundred years of British dominion, the cultural impact on India had been relatively small. When the sahibs finally packed up and went home in 1947, apart from the Indian Civil Service, the railways and the English language, they left little else behind to remind the natives of their, once, imperial presence. All in all, the impact of British culture was slight, if not, superficial. English was, and still is, used for instrumental purposes only, and thus did not transmit cultural values. In present-day India, the bulk of literature is written, not in English, but in indigenous Indian languages (Ashcroft, et al., 1989:30), pointing to the essentially instrumental purpose of English even among educated citizens in the subcontinent.[29] A very different story evolved in the West Indies. English was adopted as the official language and British, or to be more precise, English culture was imparted in schools in all the islands. Thus, for the many Afro-Caribbeans who eagerly migrated to, what they considered to be, the mother country, there were additional pull factors based on a

[29] Although English is the lingua franca in South India, and it is invariably used as the working language in institutions of higher education all over the country, the vast majority of Indians cannot even read or write, let alone speak a foreign language.

similar education, religion, language and culture. Many of these West Indians honestly considered themselves to be Englishmen or women and were taken aback when they discovered that their 'fellow countrymen' had a very different conception of Britishness. While the Asians had no such expectations, they were not ready for the overt demonstrations of hostility that they encountered.

3.5.2. Establishing the Network.

When a young man left India or Pakistan for Britain in the early fifties, he did not have his pockets full of bank notes, but one essential part of his luggage would have been the address of the cousin, distant kinsman, or, perhaps, fellow villager, who would start him off in his new life in Britain. The early settlers, those who had either stayed on after the war[30] or who had set up shop after working as peddlers around the country (see 3.4), lent a helping hand to the new arrivals. No one was ever turned away, on the contrary, food and lodging were

[30] Many Indians and Pakistanis from the Punjab joined the Merchant Navy during World War I and stayed in Britain when the war ended. During World War II many more Punjabis joined the British Army and Navy and also decided to settle permanently in the UK after 1945. (Dahya, 1973: 244; Saifullah Khan, 1977:65)

provided and efforts were made to find the newcomer a suitable job. Such hospitality was, in part, an obligation, but, on the other hand, it gave the sponsor a certain power over the recipient, who was thus drawn into the network of mutual assistance. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:30) He, in turn, would be expected to rally round a new arrival from the subcontinent and, in this way, widen the network. Consequently, in certain traditional areas of migration, such as the Mirpur District already mentioned, a chain of migration to Britain was established. The decision to leave for the West was reached by all the family and relatives, who would finance the journey. The actual emigrant would be selected from among all the suitable males, the head of the family having the casting vote. Emigration was seen as a joint venture, affecting the whole of the family for two main reasons. Firstly, the emigrant would return after working for a certain period in Britain; in other words, his stay in Britain was always seen as a temporary measure. (See 3.5.3.) On his return, with the help of his savings, he would sponsor the journey of the next member of the family to go. Secondly, during his sojourn abroad, he would have sent money home regularly, which would have been used to improve the economic status or well-being of his family or the village as a whole, for example by installing a well

or painting the mosque. (Saifullah Khan, 1977:71) It stands to reason that the more villagers or fellow kinsmen there were in Britain, the more links there were in the chain and the more new migrants could leave for *Vilayet* (Britain).[31] In the last few years of primary migration, before the 1971 Immigration Act (see 4.2.3.), Indian and Pakistani workers arriving in Britain found an extremely efficient, smoothly running 'ethnic' organization. As migrants tended to come from the same areas, there was always someone they could contact in Britain. Moreover, settled Asians still felt strong ties with their home villages and so could not and did not refuse to come to the aid of a bewildered newcomer. The large number of Mirpuris in Bradford has already been mentioned, but it is by no means a unique case. After studying Pakistani families in Oxford, Alison Shaw came to the conclusion that

"It is in principle possible, by tracing chains of migrants, to account for virtually the whole Pakistani population of Oxford." (Shaw, 1988:22)

Likewise, chain migration led to a kind of recreation of the home village in faraway Britain. Succeeding links in the chain would settle near the relative or sponsor. Once the women and children started to arrive, a relatively

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[31] *Billayat* or *Vilayet* is Urdu for 'kingdom', hence the nickname 'Blighty'.

homogenous community would establish itself in a particular area. Thus, many villages in Kashmir and the Punjab almost have their counterparts in British cities. Virtually all of Coventry's Indians, for example, have roots in villages in the Jullundur or Hoshiarpur Districts. (Thompson, 1974:243)

In a patriarchal and patrilineal society such as in rural Pakistan and India, men and women had clear cut duties and obligations. The woman's work was in the house, cleaning, cooking and looking after the children and any domestic animals the family might have. The man was responsible for earning their livelihood, either as a farmer or a craftsman. In such a society, there was never any question of the women emigrating to a foreign land, especially not the decadent West, to take advantage of the opportunities available in Britain.[32] Thus, only the male members of the family were considered for emigration, and very often the married men were selected to go. It was thought that a young bachelor could easily fall prey to

[32] In this respect there is another marked contrast between migration from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies. Owing to the lack of stable marital relationships in the Caribbean, which is itself a legacy of slavery and colonial rule, there were a large number of single parent families, invariably mothers with children. During the late fifties and sixties, many West Indian women left their children with grandparents and emigrated to Britain in search of better work opportunities. (see Foner, 1977 & Philpott, 1977)

the corrupt ways of the British, in particular the women, who were regarded as being immodest both in dress and conduct, (Saifullah Khan, 1977:69) and eager to seduce any Asian male in sight. (Shaw, 1988:32) However, despite the fact that Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol and demands chastity of both men and women, many of the married men succumbed to the influences of the West, going out drinking and resorting to the services of local prostitutes. Sometimes gossip about a man's un-Islamic activities could reach his relatives back home via letters from fellow migrants or other men returning home for a holiday. This would be seen as an abandonment of one's obligations to the family, who would either hasten the arrangement of a marriage, in the case of a bachelor, or, in the case of a married man, insist that he were joined in Britain by his wife and children (see 3.5.3.).

In the early days of post-war migration, the all-male household was commonplace and in many cases the inmates were either related or came from the same village. The usual practice was to rent a room, or to be strictly correct, a share in a room, as overcrowding among Pakistanis and Indians was notorious and a subject of many jokes among the indigenous population at the time. (Kureishi, 1986:9) Sometimes as many as eighteen or twenty men would occupy a two-bedroomed house. Men

working on night shifts would share beds with men on day shifts, which was a way of reducing on the rent. (Shaw, 1988:35-6)

One of the advantages of such multi-occupation lodging houses was the achievement of the migrant's main objective in coming to Britain: saving money. In the early days substantial amounts were sent home on a regular basis, but as time went by, the men began to send less and save more. The intention was to return to India or Pakistan with an impressive lump sum. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:31) In order to gain as much as possible from their stay in Britain, many Asians realized that property investment was an ideal way of increasing their capital. Buying a house dispensed with rent payments and subservience to the landlord, who could throw out an unwanted tenant at a moment's notice. (Dahya, 1974:97) Most of the houses bought by migrants during the sixties were often collectively owned, the senior relative being the official owner. The kin group would all club together and finance the purchase, or else interest-free loans were obtained from fellow Asians. There was great reluctance on the part of the early migrants to take out a mortgage. First and foremost, for Muslims the giving or receiving of interest is prohibited by Islam. According to Islamic law the only type of loans that are

permissible are those given or received without interest. Any interest is supposed to be distributed among the poor and destitute. (Shaw, 1988:42-3) However, it would be naive to imagine that religious reasons alone prevented many Pakistanis or Muslim Indians from taking advantage of British building societies. As with many other aspects of life in their new country, a large number of Asians of all religions simply did not know how the system worked, or even distrusted it. Another factor to take into account is the enormous status attached to property ownership and the disreputable situation of being in debt, or what amounts to the same, living on money borrowed from outside the family network. Consequently, relatively few Asians, even when eligible, became council house tenants as permanent rent paying is rated very low and practically regarded as living on charity.[33]

The houses that were purchased in the sixties were large, invariably shabby, and very cheap. They were usually decaying Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses in city centres destined to be pulled down to make way for

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[33] In recent years the situation has changed to a certain degree. By 1982, 53 per cent of Bangladeshis, as opposed to 19 per cent of Asians overall, were living in public sector housing, but many are discouraged from applying because they tend to be allocated flats rather than houses, which involves splitting up joint or extended families. (Smith, 1989:92-3)

tower blocks. In fact one of the ironies of the mass migration in the sixties is that, thanks to the Asians who bought up large numbers of these houses in slum districts of cities like Bradford and repaired or restored them, many inner-city areas have revived and prospered. The migrants were accused of creating the slums, (Castles,et.al., 1984:29) but in actual fact, in some cases, the reverse has been true. Many slum areas have been given a new lease on life because of the new immigrants, without whom no doubt they would have been completely demolished. (Murphy, 1987,31; Gupta, 1989: 31-33)

One of the complaints voiced by the local inhabitants was the lack of hygiene observed by the blacks. Many in fact believed that Asians lived in crowded conditions out of choice as opposed to out of necessity. While it is true that they preferred to live in lodging houses with fellow Asians, regardless of the number of tenants already occupying the house, this was mainly due to their own lack of fluency in English and familiarity with British laws and customs. Furthermore, many Asians met with unfriendliness and excuses from prospective white landlords, who would justify their prejudices of Asian tenants by saying that they were unreliable with the rent, careless of other people's property and generally

slack in fulfilling the requirements of their tenancy. (Daniel, 1976:245) Bearing in mind that a large percentage of all Asian migrants came from rural areas in the subcontinent and, for that reason, found urban life completely alien to them, it cannot be denied that, to a certain extent, these landlords' anxieties were not unfounded. Some Indians or Pakistanis did not know how to use an English bathroom or toilet, (Shaw, 1988:35) and would have felt out of their element in Islamabad or Bombay, let alone Bradford or Birmingham. Unfortunately very often, educated, professional Asians, who were perfectly at home with all aspects of British life, received the same treatment as recently arrived peasant immigrants. The mere fact of their shared skin colour automatically classified them as 'undesirable tenants'. G.S. Aurora reports a far from unusual case of an educated Sikh being turned down by several landladies, clearly unable to see beyond the stereotype image of primitive, unclean Orientals. (Aurora, 1967:136-8)

The Asian community ethos of togetherness led to a concentration of Indians and Pakistanis in certain areas, usually the older parts of large industrial towns and cities. In a sense these migrants became 'replacement residents' as well as replacement workers. As the white working class moved out of the decaying parts of the inner

cities into suburban council or owner-occupied estates, they vacated a number of crumbling, substandard dwellings, into which the newcomers were obliged to move. (Castles, et.al.,1984:118) Other accommodation was not made available to them both for reasons of enforced segregation and employment.

Before the Race Relations Act of 1968, which made it unlawful to discriminate against anybody because of his/her colour, race, ethnic or national origins in employment and housing, (Layton-Henry, 1984:133) there was a certain degree of reluctance to grant accommodation to migrants in predominantly white areas. When it came to buying property, local residents would, if they could, put pressure on the estate agents to dissuade the prospective buyer from completing the purchase.[34] It was generally thought that once one group of West Indians or Asians were 'allowed' to move in, hordes would quickly follow and the respectability of the street would be in jeopardy. When white residents felt their area was in danger of being invaded, the more affluent ones moved out, leaving houses

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[34] Dervla Murphy describes a not uncommon case of intimidation by the National Front to prevent a young Pakistani couple (the husband was a doctor in a local hospital) from buying a house in a 'white' suburb of Bradford. The estate agent had been "personally threatened" by the fascist organization and had refused to conclude the sale. (Murphy, 1987:76)

that were either bought up by Asians, because of their cheapness, or else doomed for demolition. In the case of houses owned by the local authority, applicants who, for whatever reason, were regarded as undesirable occupants of the newer or better quality houses, were placed in slum property. (Rex & Moore, 1967:26) Consequently, large numbers of migrants, who invariably qualified as 'undesirables', were concentrated in inner city areas. By the early 1960s seventy-five percent of all immigrants from the New Commonwealth were housed in the major conurbations: London, the West Midlands, South East Lancashire, Merseyside, Tyneside and West Yorkshire. London alone contained almost one half of the nations's total immigrant population. (Walvin, 1984:112) However, this phenomenon was not confined to Britain alone. The new ethnic minorities in many Western European countries were following suit in forming new ghetto areas. (Castles, et al., 1984:117-120)

This process of ghettoization, which occurred in areas such as Sparkbrook and Handsworth in Birmingham, Manningham in Bradford, Notting Hill, Tower Hamlets and Southall in London and Highfields in Leicester, was mainly due to three factors. Firstly, discriminatory practices in the housing market that have already been mentioned left the majority of newcomers with no other option.

Secondly, the system of mutual aid in an alien environment made physical proximity to members of one's kin group advisable and indeed practical. Finally, the need to live near one's place of employment in order to reduce travelling expenses precluded residence in more pleasant but also more peripheral neighbourhoods. (Cashmore & Troyna, 1983:108)

It has been pointed out that most of the immigrant workers from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent were recruited to fill the vacancies left by the indigenous population. In the post-war years, as the standard of living gradually rose, many white workers were reluctant to continue doing heavy or dirty jobs in factories and foundries, low-paid jobs in the textile industry or jobs requiring regular shift work, such as in public transport or hospitals. Thus, the expanding British economy meant that the country needed new workers, but the labour shortage was basically for low-status jobs, vacancies which the British workers were reluctant to fill. (Krausz, 1972:95) A large proportion of Indians and Pakistanis came from rural areas of the subcontinent and, therefore, were singularly unqualified for work in a modern industrial and technological society like Britain. They obtained a job which was commensurate with the skills, or lack of them, that they had acquired.

Agricultural know-how was of little use and so the majority were funnelled into unskilled jobs, ranging from assembly lines to building sites.

Although in recent years many black migrants have managed to achieve a certain degree of upward social mobility (Ballard, 1992: 488), the 1982 survey conducted by the Policy Studies Institute indicated that Asians and Afro-Caribbeans were still over-represented in semi- and unskilled work. (Saggar,1992: 60) Nevertheless, many West Indians and Asians were also professional people, mostly doctors and nurses. As many as 18 per cent of doctors recruited to general practice in Britain between 1967-1969 had qualifications obtained in the subcontinent, compared to 4 per cent in previous years. (Krausz, 1972:97)

Lack of English was a serious obstacle to obtaining more interesting or more responsible work and very often night shifts at factories were manned exclusively by Pakistanis, as they could communicate more easily with one another than with their English workmates. This naturally led to a catch-22 situation. The less contact these men had with native English speakers, the longer they took to acquire the linguistic skills that many so desperately needed. However unpleasant the work, however unsociable the hours, in the early days of mass migration from the subcontinent, a week's wage in Britain could often be the

equivalent of several months' hard work in the home country. [35] This meant that generous, by Asian standards, remittances could be sent back to wives and parents. It also meant that migrants were very mobile as news of better paid employment reached them through the network and obliged them to set off to another part of the country in pursuit of the chance to earn more money, their prime objective in being in Britain. Newcomers did not always find work immediately. Their kinsman would accommodate them until a job materialized or else would inform them of the possibilities elsewhere. Alison Shaw describes a not unusual case of a young man who flew to Glasgow, where he had a contact from the village, later tried his luck in Wolverhampton and finally ended up at British Leyland (now the Rover Group plc) in Oxford. (Shaw, 1988:33-4)

While it is true that most migrants could not opt for skilled jobs, there were also cases of professional people who, out of necessity or because of blatant discrimination, were forced to accept employment for which they were overqualified. Some Asian graduates had to take unskilled labouring jobs whenever their degrees were not recognized in Britain. Consequently, some middle-class

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[35] Rex & Moore (1967:119-20) quote the average annual per capita income in Mirpur at the time of writing as £19, while the average weekly wage for Pakistanis was £13.

educated Indians worked on building sites, either because their qualifications were considered worthless in Britain, or for purely economic reasons. (Desai,1963:74) The earnings of a bricklayer in Britain were far higher than those of a school teacher or clerk in India. (Aurora, 1967:30-1) On the other hand, a former Mirpuri peasant had the chance of becoming a landlord and accumulating property in spite of his illiteracy. (Allen, 1971:87) To a large extent the 1968 Act put an end to unfair discrimination on grounds of colour, but prior to the Bill non-white applicants for professional or managerial appointments were systematically rejected in favour of a white candidate, regardless of his/her suitability to the post concerned. (Richardson & Lambert, 1986:47; Smith, 1977: passim) If segregation in the housing sector led to the creation of close-knit Asian ghettoes, discrimination in employment encouraged many migrants to set themselves up in small businesses and thus obviate the need to integrate in the white labour market. The late sixties and early seventies saw a large number of Asian shops sprouting almost overnight. These shops were essentially family concerns, staffed by the immediate family and patronised by fellow Asians. There was a definite trend towards self-employment amongst Indian and Pakistani communities because owning a business

represented independence from the white population and a injection of self-esteem, so valuable to combat the inescapable feelings of inferiority that minority groups are prone to. (Cashmore & Troyna, 1983:87) The early Sikh peddlers progressed from hawking suitcases full of their wares around the country to selling goods from a market stall. These market stalls evolved into shops or warehouses and the former peddlers soon turned to manufacturing their own products. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:38) During the sixties an elaborate infra-structure of ethnic services and businesses flourished. Grocers, cloth shops, travel agents, cinemas, garages, among many other services were established to cater for Asian clients. At first white Britons kept their distance, nor would they have been particularly welcome in the initial stage, but nowadays Asian shops and services do trade with whites and blacks alike. One Asian business that soon became popular with the indigenous population was the corner shop, open seven days a week and sometimes twelve hours a day. Sheer hard work and long opening hours made these tiny businesses flourish [36] and they have come to

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[36] In the London area alone 5,500 of the 7,000 newsagents are owned and run by Asians, 3,000 of whom are Patels. (Today, 8.10.90) Bhikhu Parekh states that "Asians control nearly half the retail trade in Britain" and that "the Asian presence in critical areas of the British economy at the turn of the century is bound to be

form an inseparable part of British culture. Not only have Asians transformed the appearance of many British High Streets by opening shops to cater for their community. Sikhs and Bangladeshis have pioneered Indian cuisine and have created a taste for their cooking among the white population. Indian restaurants, mostly run by Bangladeshi Sylhetis, once employed as cooks on British ships, have become immensely popular and can be found in every large town in Britain.

The importance of the Asian network of services cannot be underestimated. As they made themselves self-sufficient and independent of the whites, they closed ranks and made integration, or anglicization, virtually unnecessary. It is again ironic that another of the most frequent grievances the white population have against the Asians is their unwillingness to integrate and adopt British customs, whereas their flair for business and dogged determination to succeed in a hostile environment has been spurred on by the social marginality that they experienced from the host population at large. One wonders whether Asian businesses would ever have prospered so much if the first migrants had not been pushed towards finding an alternative to the British system.

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considerable". (1989: 15)

3.5.3. The Myth of Return.

Discrimination by the white British population was only one of the reasons why Asians had no desire to 'go native'. They considered themselves to be sojourners who would be working in the United Kingdom on a temporary basis. After a few years, they would return home to make way for another member of the kin group, possibly a younger brother or cousin. They looked to India or Pakistan and the family and village left behind for comfort to see them through the cold, dark British evenings. For this reason overcrowding in lodging houses could be borne with, unfriendly workmates could be ignored, and the intricacies of British bureaucracy could be dealt with by an English speaking kinsman. British, or Western culture, for that matter, was seen by Muslims, Sikh and Hindus alike as degenerate and unworthy of respect. As far as the first generation of migrants from the subcontinent were concerned, Britain was merely a place where they could work and earn a large amount of money in a relatively short period of time. They saw no need to come to terms with the customs and lifestyle of the British. After all, in four or five years' time, they would be back tilling the land in Azad Kashmir or Sylhet.

Fears about the alarming numbers of Commonwealth immigrants entering Britain stirred up racial tensions and succeeding Governments felt the need to bring in legislation to reduce the number of non-whites 'swamping' the country. (See 4.2) Asian workers already in Britain could foresee the migratory chain being broken once primary immigration was stopped. When news of impending legislation became known, migrants realised that entry restrictions[37] would make it impossible for them to return to Britain in the event of conditions at home worsening. They could no longer return to India or Pakistan on a trial basis and then go back to Britain, or send another family member in their place if their economic situation required it. The ban on migration acted more as a stimulus to the entry of dependants than as a deterrent for prospective workers since the policies adopted reduced the number of workers arriving from the New

[37] The first immigration law to impose restrictions on the free entry of Commonwealth citizens was the 1962 Act. The 1968 Act was extended to include British citizens from the Commonwealth. Under the 1971 Immigration Act, Commonwealth citizens and British citizens from the Commonwealth are treated exactly the same as aliens, unless they are patrials, or what amounts to the same thing, white. In other words, they require either a quota voucher or a work permit. Legislation concerning the entry of immigrants will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Commonwealth but encouraged the permanent settlement of minority ethnic groups. (Castles, et al., 1984:37 & 43-47)

At first glance it might seem illogical that Asians should want to expose their wives and daughters to the corrupt, permissive ways of the West. Moreover, supporting a family entailed far more expenses than paying the monthly rent for a single bedroom. Various theories have been put forward as to the motives behind the arrival of the wives and children of these temporary migrants. On one hand, after the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968, it was no longer safe to go back to one's wife and children in India or Pakistan because unless the migrant returned "for substantial periods every two years" (ibid.,45), which would safeguard his right of residence, he might not be eligible for re-entry into Britain. Thus, it might no longer be possible to keep up the migratory chain. Those that left had to be sure that they did not wish to return and, for this reason, many opted for family reunification in Britain as opposed to the prospect of foregoing improvement in his and his family's material prospects.

On the other hand, it could be argued that bringing families into Britain was the only way to maintain chain migration. (Jeffery, 1976:49 & 67) Sons were brought over

thanks to the ambiguities in the 1962 controls, which allowed the unrestricted entry of dependants. Many boys and young men arrived to join their 'fathers', who were frequently uncles, distant cousins or simply fellow villagers. (Dahya, 1972; 1973:253) Although Asians have a much wider understanding of the term 'relative' than do the British, it is clear that this was a deliberate, and successful, attempt to outwit the authorities. When this legal loophole was spotted, children under the age of eighteen were not allowed to enter Britain without being accompanied by their mothers. [38] Therefore the presence of wives was deemed necessary to allow more male workers into the country. What is not satisfactorily explained by this theory is why these wives stayed in Britain once the adolescent boy was safely delivered to his father bearing in mind the undesirability of exposing Asian women to British culture.

Alison Shaw suggests a totally different explanation to the arrival of women and children and the establishment of a permanent ethnic community in the United Kingdom. It has already been mentioned that the migrants' activities in Britain could not easily be kept secret from their

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[38] This regulation concerning the entry of children was included in the 1965 White Paper Immigration from the Commonwealth.

relatives at home owing to the nature of the Asian community, where internal solidarity features prominently. Un-Islamic behaviour, or in the case of Hindus or Sikhs, loose living, would have been reported directly or indirectly back to the family in the subcontinent. Straying from the fold meant, and still means, much more for Asians than it does for Europeans, however moral and upright the latter might be. Dating an English girl-friend could easily lead to marriage, which sounds respectable enough, but if marrying another Asian outside one's kin group or caste brings dishonour on a family, a permanent alliance with a Westerner involves severing all ties with one's family, community and, in many cases, religion. It is seen as a rejection of Indianness or Islam, or both. Naturally there have been happy marriages made between Asians and whites, approved by both sides, but they tend to be the exception rather than the norm. As will be discussed in 3.5.5, marriage involves two extended families rather than just a man and a woman and in Asian societies failure to conform, at least nominally, to the tradition could result in complete ostracism. When news of their husbands' wayward behaviour reached the ears of the wives in India or Pakistan, they felt it their duty to remind the men of their family obligations. Very often the in-laws themselves would encourage their

daughters-in-law to pack their bags and join their husbands in Britain to guide them back to the straight and narrow. When the reprobate was a single man, his family wasted no time in finding a suitable bride for him to take back to Britain. (Shaw, 1988:44-9)

A fourth explanation for the influx of women and children may be due to more mundane reasons of pure financial necessity. Original plans for a five-year stay in Britain sometimes had to be revised because insufficient funds had been saved to enable the migrant to return home triumphantly with enough money accumulated to set himself up in business in India or Pakistan. Although British salaries were high in comparison to those earned in the subcontinent, the jobs Asians did were low paid by British standards. In times of recession the Asian workers were always the first to be laid off and even during bouts of unemployment remittances still had to be sent back home. Gradually the initial five-year sojourn developed into a ten-year stay and the longer a man spent abroad away from the day-to-day village routine, the more estranged he became from his former village contacts, who would be so necessary to obtain loans or licences to set up a new business. People retire earlier in India than in Britain and the older a man became, the less likely he would find a job in his country of origin. (Parekh,

1978:40) Thus, migrants stayed on in the hope of achieving what they had originally come to Britain for: economic prosperity, but the fulfilment of that goal kept them thousands of miles apart from their loved ones. Foreseeing that their return home would be postponed longer than they had expected, many Sikhs and Hindus opted for family reunion and Indian women began arriving in the early sixties. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women were not to join their husbands in large numbers until the end of the decade, and in fact the majority did not come to Britain until the seventies. (Ballard, 1990:223; Wilson, 1978:vii)

None of these theories for the reunification of Asian families is completely satisfactory and the motives behind the arrival of the women must be a combination of ideological and economic factors. Again this trend was not unique to Britain as in many West European countries with guest workers family immigration became more pronounced during the 1970s. (Castles, et al., 1984: passim)

Despite the fact that small but compact ethnic communities were being established in Britain, almost all first generation migrants continued to maintain that they would one day return to the subcontinent. With Asian children being born and/or educated in Britain, this

return is continually being delayed. The enormous importance that the Asian community places on education, and the realization that standards are higher in Europe than in their homeland, discourage parents from uprooting their children from school in order to return to India. Thus, the final journey home is postponed until the children are fully-fledged adults. However, by this time the second generation have become, to a greater or lesser extent, anglicized and look on **Britain** as home and India or Pakistan as a foreign country, where some of their relatives happen to live. Asian attitudes to education are an example of the ambiguous feelings the migrants have about their adopted country. British morals are seen as being lax and yet the country is admired for its wealth, education and health services. Western values, in particular the abandonment of the elderly, are often scorned, but the fact that British political and administrative institutions are not rife with bribery and corruption lead many Asians to consider it to be a truly civilized society. (Shaw, 1988:139-141)

The second generation migrants do not regard Britain as an alien land and some refuse to emigrate to India or Pakistan, because these countries cannot offer them the lifestyle they have grown up to accept. However emotionally attached they feel to their parents' values

and culture, they are British Asians, whose homeland is the cold, misty island in north-west Europe. The first generation migrants try to forge links between their children and India, sometimes by arranging a marriage with a young man or woman from the subcontinent, but in many cases their children, while agreeing to have a marriage arranged by their parents, insist upon a **British** Asian partner instead of someone with no knowledge of the English language and no experience of life in Britain.

Consequently, the parents stay on in Britain, comforted by the thought that when they retire they will return to the land of their birth. However, once they have spent anything up to twenty-five years away from their village, many of their relatives and friends have grown old and died and they themselves have become out of touch with everyday life there. In short, they have unconsciously developed along different lines to Indian or Pakistani village society. Some do return, often for health reasons, the damp English climate being too much for them, but they have to adapt just as much to life there as they did when they first arrived in Britain. For the vast majority that stay with their sons and daughters in Britain, the 'myth of return' is a social necessity. They cling to the idea of going 'home',

"to legitimise continued adherence to the values of their homeland and to condemn the assimilation of English cultural values as irrelevant and destructive. The importance of return as a real goal has gradually faded and instead it has become a central charter for the maintenance of Sikh ethnicity in Britain." (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:40-1)

The Ballards are describing the Sikh community, but their conclusions are valid for all the first generation Asian migrants in Britain.

A similarity of motives that impulsed emigration and a shared myth of return may suggest that Britain's South Asian population form a homogeneous group, whereas nothing could be further from the truth. British citizens of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi descent do share many common features. To the unenlightened, or simply prejudiced, white Briton, they are all Asians because they all have brown skin. Granted that the generic term 'Asian' is one accepted by members of the South Asian community themselves in spite of its ambiguity (Chinese migrants are **not** 'Asians'), it is wise to bear in mind that there are substantial differences among the various ethnic groups.

The upwards of one million Asians currently resident in Britain [39] can be divided up into Indians, Pakistanis

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[39] The 1992 Handbook estimates the total ethnic population of the United Kingdom to be 2.6 million, 45 percent of whom are of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1992)

and Bangladeshis, and then subdivided according to their religion, caste, language and kin-based networks, giving anything up to a hundred different sub-categories of what the white British happily lump together as 'Asians'. While it is true that for the Asians themselves these differences are obvious, it is not so for the majority of the British population. Although subtle kinship or even caste differences are not relevant to this study, as it is rather the effect the arrival of the Asian migrants had on the white British and the latter's response to them more than the intricacies and complexities of Asian society which will be analyzed, it does seem useful to point out some of the more striking of these differences.

Three regions of the subcontinent have provided the vast majority of Britain's Asian population (see figure 3.1.). The Bangladeshis originally came from the Sylhet district in the north-east of the country. They are Muslims, usually of a rural background, often illiterate and are still overwhelmingly concentrated in deprived inner-city areas. They share these four general characteristics with the Pakistanis, who came from Mirpur District and Azad Kashmir, to the north of the Punjab. United by a common religion and social status, the Bangladeshis and the Pakistanis do not share a common language. Most of the former speak Bengali, while the

latter tend to speak Punjabi (those from Azad Kashmir) or a dialectal version of it (Mirpuris).

The Indians in Britain came mainly from either the area around Jullundur in the Indian Punjab or the western state of Gujerat. As far as language is concerned, the Pakistanis are more likely to communicate easily with the Indian Punjabis than the latter with their fellow Indians from Gujerat, Punjabi and Gujerati not being mutually intelligible languages. (Allen, 1971:89) It is understandable that the finer internal divisions amongst people from the subcontinent are not perceived by the white population, but surely the height of British ignorance was reached when an English foreman asked a Nigerian to interpret for his Pakistani workmates. (Banton, 1967:374)

As to religious differences, the Indians, unlike the Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, tend to be either Hindus, Sikhs or Parsees, although there are some Muslims among the Gujeratis. After Independence in 1947, most of the Muslims resident in India moved into the newly created Muslim state of Pakistan.[40] There are also some Christians, mainly of Goanese origin.

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[40] Among the Asian writers who will be discussed in chapter 6, the families of Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi are examples of those Muslims who crossed the border into Pakistan.

Sikhism is defined as a reformed Hinduism, as Guru Nanak, the first Sikh *guru* (spiritual head), abolished the caste system, improved the status of women, and generally advocated a more egalitarian society. During the Muslim domination of India in the fifteenth century, many untouchables were being converted to Islam, and in order to avoid a massive exodus, a new sect, later to be transformed into a militant community, was created. (Spear, 1978:57 & 133-5) Theoretically, Sikhism clearly favours the underclass, that is women and the lower castes, which is suggested as being the reason for its coming into being, but despite the ideals of Sikhism, caste is still taken into account and the custom of giving dowries is still observed among its followers. Sikhs are easily identifiable from other believers because of the turbans worn by the men. Sikhs, both male and female, are not allowed to cut their hair and the men are forbidden to shave. All Sikh males share the same surname: *Singh* (lion) and the females *Kaur* (princess). The Sikhs were much admired by the British for their bravery and discipline. Their loyalty to the British during the 1857 Uprising was not forgotten and Sikhs supplied a large percentage of the Indian army although they themselves made up a small part of the population of India as a whole

and a bare majority of the population of Punjab. (Talbot, 1991:207)

In the early days of migration from the New Commonwealth, many Sikhs abandoned their turbans so as not to appear too conspicuous. Roger T. Bell, writing in 1968, commented that

"It is rare to see a man under the age of forty who still wears a beard and a turban." (Bell, 1968:56)

Once the families arrived, the Sikhs who had 'gone native' felt somewhat ashamed at their rapid conversion to Western ways, and began to grow their hair and beards again. The wearing of a turban has now become "a public statement of their ethnic identity". (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:37)

The Hindus in Britain, 70 percent of whom come from Gujerat, are not so easily distinguishable as the Sikhs. In contrast to both Islam and Sikhism, Hinduism does not require followers to worship in public places, although Hindu temples have been set up in Glasgow, Southampton, Bolton and London. (Jackson & Nesbitt, 1991:6) Hindus do not have such a long tradition of migration as the other Asian communities. It was believed that travelling overseas would lead to the defilement of upper caste Hindus as caste taboos could not be easily maintained in alien lands. In Britain castes differences are still strictly observed among Hindus especially as regards

marriages, which are not arranged with members of the same kin group in contrast to the Muslims, who, while not recognizing caste, rarely marry total strangers. (Ballard, 1990:230-1; Cook, 1991)

The Parsee community in Britain comes mainly from the state of Maharashtra, especially around the Bombay area. They speak Gujerati like most of the Hindus and tend to be middle class people involved in professional occupations. Although the Parsees do not consider themselves 'Indians', they are inevitably categorized as such by the white British. Of all the Asians, the Parsees are possibly the most anglicized. The men wear western clothes at all times and the women may only wear a saree for a special occasion. They are scattered among the mainstream population and often marry outside their religious or ethnic community. In fact many Parsees have virtually abandoned Zoroastrianism, or practise a very diluted version of it, owing to their wish to integrate totally into the British way of life. (Towler Mehta, 1982:passim)

It has already been mentioned (3.5.1. note 28) that many Asians arrived in Britain via East Africa. Although these people originally came from the Punjab or Gujerat and hence share religion, language and customs with their fellow Indians, there are definite differences between the Asians who came straight from the subcontinent and

those who were emigrating, as it were, for the second time. First and foremost, the Asians who abandoned Kenya, Uganda, Malawi or Tanzania basically for political reasons left for Britain permanently, that is, they had no intention or desire to return. Unlike the Asians who came direct from India or Pakistan, the East African Asians have never cherished a myth of return. In the case of Uganda, they were expelled from their adopted country with no possibility of return after the process of 'africanization' carried out by Idi Amin, or, as regards Kenya, they simply saw fit to take advantage of their British passports to try their luck in Britain as opposed to staying on and becoming nationalized Kenyans when that country became independent in 1963.

These East African Asians were urbanized people, middle class, unlike the rural Mirpuris or Sylhetis, and were, in a manner of speaking, used to being migrants. They were already part of the established Asian diaspora and were quick to lay down roots and create a sense of community in their new land. Many of the thriving Asian businesses are run by people who had already had a similar shop or trade in East Africa, in particular the Gujerati Hindus. (Robinson & Flintoff, 1982:257; Shahane, 1989:45) These more recent migrants (the Kenyan Asians started arriving in 1965 and the Uganda Asians in 1972), all

arrived in complete family groups. The men had no advantage over the women in this respect as both husband and wife, and the children, had to become acclimatized to their new home at the same time.

The Asians who arrived from East Africa were already fluent in English, which meant that they did not have any difficulty in securing a skilled or administrative job. In fact many were public sector workers and, thanks to their qualifications and linguistic ability, were not forced into low-grade jobs as the early migrants from the subcontinent had been. Financially they were in a much better position than their predecessors as the majority were given compensation by the African Governments (with the notable exception of Uganda) which helped to start them up in their new country. Neither were the East African Asians concentrated in inner-city areas on arrival. They tended to look for better accommodation in various parts of Britain and although they have indeed settled near kinsmen, they are not always to be found in typical 'immigrant' areas. (Bhachu, 1985:5-6; 31; 36)

Although the white population of Britain are quite unaware of there being any differences between those Asians who came direct from India or Pakistan and those who came from East Africa, the latter are very conscious of forming a separate ethnic group. An observant white

Briton might notice that some Sikhs wear white or plain-coloured turbans, while others sport brightly coloured or patterned ones. The white turban is invariably worn by an East African Sikh, who sees it as a clear ethnic marker to distinguish him from Indian Sikhs. This is just an example of the extent to which their East Africanness is very important to these Asians, who do not wish to be considered like working-class Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, with whom they do not tend to associate. (ibid.,51-3)

3.5.4. The New Memsahibs

At this point it would be enlightening to draw a few comparisons between the behaviour of the Asian community in Britain and the British community in India during the colonial period. Naturally, a clear parallelism cannot be reached for the simple reason that the socio-economic situation of the two communities was totally different. In India the British were first the revenue collectors and then the masters. In Britain the Asians were, at the beginning, replacement labour, doing all the unpleasant

jobs disdained by the indigenous population, and, in later years, possibly even today, are barely tolerated as a marginal oddity or one of the drawbacks of living in a democratic society.

The reasons that drove the Englishmen of the 18th and 19th centuries to set sail for India were, undoubtedly, economic. They aimed to squeeze as much wealth as they could from the subcontinent. Likewise, the Indians and Pakistanis who left for Britain in the nineteen sixties and seventies were seeking an improvement in their standard of living. However, at this point the similarity must end. The early European adventurers to the East Indies were surely 'pulled' by the ideals of discovery of the unknown and service to the monarch. The post-war Asian migrants, although they were indeed attracted by stories of the affluent West, owed their departure, to a large extent, to the appalling conditions in rural areas of India and Pakistan especially after Partition. People who are obliged by poverty and famine to embark on such an adventure and leave behind their familiar world, albeit temporarily, are in a very different sociocultural group than those who voluntarily choose to go.

Despite this obvious disparity in motive, it is still possible to compare a similar reception and reaction to the newly adopted land. The early nabobs, before the