

# Repression at Home, Racism Outside

## The Lives of Women of Punjabi Origin Living in Scotland

Hannah Bradby

GLASGOW, a city in Scotland, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became home to migrants fleeing persecution or poverty in their countries of origin. In the 1990s, three per cent of Glasgow's population are of non-European descent (*The New Scots*, Bashir Maan, 1992). The majority of these people is from the Punjab. In certain sections of the city Punjabi is the language heard most often in the shops where Indian and Pakistani fruit and vegetables, sweetmeats, spices, silk, salwaar kameez, wedding jewellery and dupattas can be bought and Hindi/Urdu videos hired.

Young Punjabi men have been arriving in Scotland in large numbers since the 1950s, (when post-world war II travel restrictions were lifted) in the hope of finding well-paid work which would allow them to return home wealthy. For many, the dream of return was never realised, either because they became unwilling to give up life in Britain, or they did not make enough money to enable them to retire. Instead, their families were brought over to join early pioneer migrants, so that there is now a generation of young adults who have always lived in Scotland, but whose parents came from the Indian subcontinent. These British Asians are familiar with two different cultures. They are brought up speaking Punjabi at home, following a traditional diet and religious customs, yet are educated in mainstream Scottish schools, together with children of the majority population.



A gurudwara in Glasgow

The pressures which young Punjabi women have to fare to conform both to the traditional Punjabi and to the British way of life are illustrated by British and Punjabi negative stereotypes. Some non-Asians believe that young British Asian women are passive, oppressed by their parents, forbidden from making their own choices in education and career options, and forced instead into early marriage. In this view an 'arranged' marriage is thought to mean that the woman has no rights to express an opinion in the choice of her husband. It is assumed that all those who have relatives in the Indian subcontinent are the same.

A stereotype held by some British Asians is that white women have lax morals, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, engage in casual sex, have

poor mothering skills, and have little ability to make lasting emotional partnerships. There is a fear that young women of Asian origin will be corrupted by living in Scotland, and develop similarly "loose" morals. Families sometimes send girls back to the subcontinent, for a period prior to marriage, if they feel there is a danger of their becoming too 'westernised'.

This article discusses the ways in which young women of Asian origin are using both their cultural worlds in their lives as Scottish Asians, as well as how they decide in the course of their daily lives which elements of their dual culture to adopt and which to reject.

Recently, a 24-year-old Muslim woman had her arranged marriage, which had taken place in Pakistan when she was 14, annulled in the Scottish Court. She blamed her father and said "He has ruined my life. I do not really want to speak to him...I have lost my teenage years when I could have been carefree and happy but instead I was treated like a servant." This incident has served to confirm stereotypes both of those in the West who assume all Asians are repressive fundamentalists, and of those traditional Punjabi families who fear the corrupting influence of a 'western lifestyle'. The young woman in this case has been outcast from much of the Muslim community in Glasgow, spat upon in the street, and is thought to have brought shame and disgrace upon her family. And if she

had grown up in Pakistan rather than in Scotland, it would have been far more difficult for her to bring up her children alone while studying for an engineering degree, as she is presently doing. She might have stayed in her marriage, perhaps due to the lack of alternatives, perhaps because she would have been better supported through its difficulties. Those who see a strong Asian community as necessarily coercive to women assume that this case is typical of all arranged marriages, although the woman herself says "my sister had an arranged marriage and she is very happy" (*The Scotsman*, Friday 2nd October, 1992).

In order to explore whether either of the negative stereotypes of British Asian women held any grains of truth I interviewed 21 women aged from 20 to 30, belonging to the same doctor's practice. Each woman was offered the choice of being interviewed in Punjabi or in English, and although all use Punjabi in their homes with their relatives, they preferred English for the interview. English is the language used with their contemporaries and friends, while Punjabi tends to be reserved for elder relatives. Most of the young women have little or no ability to read and write Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi, but are keen that their children learn to speak and read their mother tongue. The women saw this as important for the practical reason of being able to talk with relatives while visiting Pakistan or India. Those who did not visit the Indian subcontinent nonetheless wanted their children to be able to participate in religious events in Britain.

### **Adapting to Scotland**

The most striking thing about this group of women is that although they are all identified as 'Asian' by their

doctor, there is more variation among them than similarity. The women are single or married; from India, Pakistan, East Africa, England or Ireland; there are practising and agnostic Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and a Christian; some women are unemployed, others are in professional jobs; some have mental or physical illnesses, others are fit. This variation was reflected in what women call themselves; some describe themselves by their religion, many call themselves Indian or Pakistani, while others resist labels, preferring to see themselves as individuals. One woman pointed to the problems and absurdity of describing her 'ethnicity' to people by saying that sometimes she describes herself "for a laugh as British-Asian with a bit of Irish too". I emphasise this variation because one of the ways in which racist stereotypes operate is to assume that a group of people who are marked by a skin colour are similar in other ways too. In reality the skin colour of British-Asians varies as enormously as do their social, economic and political complexions.

There was some reluctance from women to use the term 'Asian' to describe themselves, as it did not necessarily reflect what they felt was most important about their identities, such as their religious faith or their parents' country of origin. However, in talking about themselves as part of British society, the women used terms such as 'Asian people', 'our own language', 'our own food' and 'Asian culture', and saw themselves as part of a distinct group within British society, with important things in common with other 'Asians' as compared to the rest of the British population.

In certain respects these women have the same family structure as their subcontinent grandparents; two thirds of the group are married and nearly all of these have children. All of the

married women are married to partners from their own religious and ethnic group, and many of the couples live in a joint family for at least the first few years of their marriage. All of the single women still lived with their parents, including one who has boyfriends and another with a well-paying job in a neighbouring city, where she stays during the week, returning to her mother on most weekends. Thus, even where young women are adopting some customs of the host society, such as earning their own income and choosing their own lovers, the extended family structure has not been abandoned, though it may be adapted.

There were other signs of change in the family patterns. One of the married women was living separately from her husband, because they had trouble getting along in the same house. One third of the group was still unmarried, at an age when most of their grandmothers in the rural Punjab would have had at least one child. Some of them hoped to marry later and were simply waiting for their parents to arrange a suitable match, while others were actively resisting any suggestion of an arranged marriage, sometimes in the vain hope that their parents would eventually lose interest in the subject.

The later age of marriage and occasional instances of divorce among Glasgow Punjabis are similar to instances found in contemporary urban India. However, the important comparison is with the traditions set in the Punjabi villages of thirty years ago. The continuation of an old-style Punjabi extended family depends on the marriage of the next generation.

### **Rethinking Marriage**

On the matter of arranged marriages, every interviewee had

something to say. Arranged marriages have become an emotive issue in Britain and are often cited as evidence of the oppressive nature of Asian communities. In the face of such criticism, some of the interviewees were at pains to express their approval of this way of organising partnerships. All of the married women are in arranged marriages, and most of the Muslim women are married to their cousins. None said that she had felt coerced into marriage and many pointed out that they had been given the opportunity to veto their parents' choice of husband.

Interestingly, some of those who were happy with their own arranged marriages said they would definitely not do the same for their daughters. One woman explained that an arranged marriage would not work, given that her daughter is growing up in British society, even though she herself had grown up in England and said she was happy with her own marriage that was arranged by her parents. The change in the way marriages are arranged is not necessarily the result of bitter conflict between westernised daughters and traditional parents, but perhaps due to second-generation parents' anticipation of what will be in their daughters' best interests.

Half of the single women were strongly against arranged marriages, feeling both that it is morally wrong to put pressure on a girl to marry and that the risk of ending up with an unsuitable partner is extremely high. One, who felt that she could never agree to an arranged marriage, saw this as a major impasse with her mother, and likely to be the issue which would split the Asian community along generational lines. One of the married women, in a stable and happy marriage arranged by her

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parents, said that she had been lucky to get such a good husband, but thought in principal that arranged marriages were a bad thing. Arranged marriages can function as a means of maintaining links between families that have branches both in Britain and in the Indian subcontinent. The need to maintain these links is more urgent for British Asians if they contemplate an eventual return to the subcontinent.

All except one of the twenty-one women interviewed had returned to visit their parents' country of birth for a few months on holiday. While some would not visit again until their children were older because of the lack of medical facilities in the villages, most thought that they would continue to visit India or Pakistan every two or three years. The mothers also thought it possible that their children might

marry someone from India or Pakistan. However, when asked, none of the women wanted to live there for an extended period of time. Some explained that while they enjoyed spending time with relatives, and had great affection for their villages, they would not want to be deprived of the physical and material comforts which life in Britain offers and, perhaps more importantly, they would miss Britain too much.

**Dealing with Racism**

All except one of the women had experienced some form of racist verbal abuse in Britain, mostly being called 'darkie' or 'paki' or 'indie'. This is so much a part of daily life that few of them thought of this as abuse, viewing it as one of life's minor inconveniences which has to be tolerated. Some women explained how they were lucky not to have had more trouble and most were sure that others experienced worse abuse. Another two women said they rarely went out after dark, and had therefore been spared any trouble. This is similar to the feelings of many British women that they cannot leave their homes after dark without risking



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harassment. However, for women of Asian origin, the fear of abuse is on grounds of both gender and ethnicity.

The general findings of these interviews indicate, unsurprisingly, that the stereotypes outlined at the beginning do not reflect the entire reality. The situation is complex, with no young women rejecting Punjabi culture wholesale, nor being coerced into entirely conforming to the expectations of their elders. Although both coercion and rejection certainly happen, most women's experience is a complicated mixture of the two. Two women will now be described in greater detail. The first is Aysha, a Muslim woman, and the second is Maninder, a Sikh.

### **Aysha's Experience**

Aysha (not her real name) has been in Scotland all her life, apart from two holidays in Pakistan. She is a small woman with a smiling youthful face whose pleasant demeanour stays intact despite the constant demands of her three small children. She gets on well with her parents and has behaved correctly in the eyes of the community by marrying her first cousin from Pakistan and rapidly producing healthy babies for whom she cares while her husband works as a waiter in a nearby restaurant. Her house, rented from the restaurant owners who are on an extended holiday in Pakistan, has a tide of clothes and toys which Aysha pushes back from time to time, but never quite banishes. Aysha spends her days feeding her children, playing with them, delivering them to nursery, buying the family provisions and visiting her mother and sisters. Compared with Maninder, she articulates little conflict about being both Asian and British; she seems content with her job of caring for her family, although she

wishes she could provide warmer, less damp housing for her children who frequently get ill with colds and influenza.

Islam is central to Aysha's life; she considers it important to read the holy Koran and the *hadith* and tries to learn about the history of her religion. Being a young mother she occasionally misses one of her five daily prayers, but makes up for it at the next prayer time. Aysha derives support and guidance from her belief, and seems to view it as a desirable and inevitable feature of daily life.

Aysha tells her mother all her daily worries, and she turns to her mother for advice about child care and other

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### ***The need to maintain these links is more urgent for British Asians if they contemplate an eventual return to the subcontinent***

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household matters. In childhood Aysha always obeyed her mother's orders although, in retrospect, she now thinks some of them were wrong. Her mother was born and brought up in West Punjab and did not receive any education:

"My mum was always frightened, you know. She wasn't educated and that's why she was more frightened of what she might do wrong against Islam and that's why she wanted to be more perfect".

Aysha and her sisters wore their head scarfs all day, inside and outside the house, as their mother was unsure when their heads could be uncovered in a foreign country, and so preferred to be overly, rather than under-cautious. But while her mother may have been overly strict about modesty, she was more flexible concerning other

matters. For instance, although rules about food avoidances were strict while her mother was growing up, when her daughters showed little inclination to accept these beliefs, she did not insist. "My mum used to say it, but she didn't really bother for it much".

Aysha's marriage was arranged by her elders, and in the future she will be happy to find a suitable match from within the family for her own daughter.

"Obviously I wouldn't like her to marry outside the family because sometimes it works out good, sometimes it doesn't."

But what Aysha stressed was that "I would ask her opinion; I wouldn't just push her away." Aysha's attitude to advising her own daughter seems similar to her mother's.

"My mother isn't the type of woman that would make you avoid things or not. [She] would think you've got a mind of your own."

Aysha's mother "likes to give advice" but in the end allows her daughter to sort out her own problems. But, like her mother, there are certain things on which Aysha would not compromise in her daughter's behaviour. For instance, wearing a head scarf in front of her male relatives from the age of twelve or thirteen will not be negotiable, "because then it says in the Koran that you should make your daughter wear it." If her daughter resisted, Aysha says, she would be "enraged."

Aysha disagrees with those who use the Koran to dictate how women's lives should be restricted. But rather than undermining her faith in Islam, she simply views such people as uneducated.

"There are some people [who]

would say...don't teach your daughter anything and don't send her to school, just make her read Koran and don't give her knowledge of anything. But I think that's wrong, that uneducated people would say that."

Contrary to the stereotype of the passive Asian housewife who is simply oppressed by her religion, Aysha is able to use Islam to back her own views.

"It doesn't say in the Koran that you shouldn't teach your daughter, you should teach your son. It says you should teach your daughter **more** than your son because your daughter is influencing your grandchildren...In our Koran it says be fair to your children, be equal in every way...It doesn't matter if they're boys or girls."

The lack of conflict between Aysha and her elders is not attributable to her having followed traditions blindly. She has a clear view of herself as different from her parents' generation, by virtue of her Scottish upbringing and education. About traditional Punjabi beliefs, she says: "The trouble is because I was brought up here, I don't really bother".

### Family Conflict

Despite this self-image as a member of a second generation, Aysha does not talk about putting up resistance to pressure from elders of 'the community', as Maninder does, but she does talk of actively resisting racist abuse from people in the wider



community. When people call Maninder a Paki, she tells them that she's Indian, actually. Aysha's response is to say 'All right, I'm Paki, so what? I know I'm Paki. I know now that you know as well.'

In contrast to Aysha's quiet life, Maninder has a more dramatic account of the dilemmas and difficulties of growing up as a British Asian. As she says, "It is quite hard [when] you've been brought up in two worlds." She has, in some respects, done all the things which the older generation might have feared: she smokes cigarettes, wears skirts, has her hair cut, and goes out with boys to drink alcohol and dance. Yet in other ways she performs the duties of a 'proper' Sikh daughter; she lives

with her parents and spent three and a half years nursing them in India.

She sits alongside her younger sister and talks to me in a cold room containing a sofa, two arm chairs, and a large, healthy looking cannabis plant belonging to her older brother who lives with his Hindu girlfriend in Liverpool. Over the mantelpiece hang glamorous photos of Maninder taken three years ago, wearing a red suit, matching bindi and lipstick, with a glowing complexion and a look of hope and excitement in her eyes. The contrast with how she looks nowadays is striking; she is feeling fed up and ill, wearing pyjamas, with an old cardigan and

slippers on for protection against the damp cold of her parents' flat. She blows her nose frequently, and shows me all her symptoms: a swollen jaw from a bad tooth extraction, puffy ankles from long hours selling jeans in a shop and a flaking skin condition. She is tired because she shares a single bed with her youngest sister, in a room shared with three other siblings who all get up and go to bed at different times. The second sister returns from her work as a waitress at three o'clock in the morning, and wakes every one up with her singing and talking. If they manage to sleep again, they are woken at seven when their little brother gets up to go to school. Although her parents own three flats in the building they can afford to heat only one of them.

During adolescence Maninder had constant battles with her parents over her behaviour and clothes. She wore skirts to school and got her hair cut into fashionable styles. The fact that Maninder did not have any Sikh friends at school was worrying enough for her parents, but when she also started to have boyfriends they almost despaired. Maninder did mostly as she pleased, although she felt bad about the family conflict which her lifestyle brought about. When she reached eighteen, she decided to rent a room from a neighbouring family in order to avoid her parents' constant recriminations. The family was African, which seemed to plunge her parents into even worse shame than before.

Maninder may have been able to flout her parents' wishes more than most young Punjabi women because there were few extended family members around. The lack of family is largely due to the fact that her parents' marriage was considered unsuitable. At the age of 22, Maninder's mother got a visa to travel to Scotland from India in order to marry a man who was then 55. Maninder's mother's parents wanted her to find a younger, more suitable match once she was safely in Glasgow, a sentiment with which the 55 year old himself agreed. However, Maninder's mother felt that agreements should be honoured and she married the man who was 33 years her senior. While Maninder's mother's parents were disappointed at their daughter's marriage, her father's brothers (all younger than him) were furious at his late marriage, as they had expected their own children to inherit all the family's land in the Punjab. As a consequence neither side of the family was available or willing to help bring the wayward Maninder into line and prevent shame being brought upon her parents. Maninder's mother seems to

have suffered in particular from this lack of support, having to be "a family on her own."

### The New Generation

Maninder herself feels she was deprived of a supportive family, explaining that no relatives ever called round to her house. The only time Maninder remembers her extended family taking an interest in her welfare was when she was renting a room with her African neighbour. She had dropped into her parents' flat in order to visit her little brother who was ill, and was just crossing the threshold when two of her male cousins jumped out from behind the door and locked her into a room. They subjected her to verbal abuse, apparently convinced that she was having sex with the neighbour with whom she was staying. Maninder recalls: "I didn't know what was happening, where I was getting hit from, it didn't ever cross my mind that they were ever going to think this or suggest this, so you can imagine what I was like. I was in a terrible state".

She tells of this violent incident without bitterness and her only serious regret about her family seems to be the lack of affection she had from her mother. However, she knows how difficult it was for her mother to accept her behaviour. Of her own and her sister's behaviour Maninder comments: "All the things we do, we're not allowed to do, but we do it [anyway]." The price she has paid has been notoriety and condemnation. She says she is "known as an outcast to all the Indians I see now." But she sees herself not just as a disobedient daughter, but as someone who has fought battles and gained ground which will make it easier for her little sisters and other young Punjabis to be in control of their own lives. She proudly recalls, "The policeman used

to say to me 'You'll be a pioneer of things to come.'"

Like other pioneers, Maninder sometimes finds it difficult seeing the next generation of young women taking over her position on the vanguard, and doing things differently. She tells how she saw an Asian girl smoking a cigarette on the street, with no shame, in front of an older Punjabi woman dressed in salwaar kameez. Maninder may have been one of the pioneers of female British Asian smokers, but she feels that at least she had the decency to do it in private, where shame would not be brought upon her family. It was only when she was unable to compromise, or felt elders' objections to be ridiculous that she disregarded considerations of social shame. Mixed with the shock at the "improper" behaviour is a pride at the young girl's defiance and some pleasure at having made it possible.

She says: "All Asian girls walk about with lipstick on, they walk about with their hair out, not in plaits, they're more fashionable, more trendy. I feel like a granny compared to them now. They are more outrageous than I'd ever been".

Maninder believes that the traditional Punjabi ways that made her life so difficult are on their way out in Glasgow, especially for girls. She claims that "there's no such thing as an Asian girl now," by which she means that you may see them walking down the street, respectably dressed in salwaar kameez, with neatly plaited hair, but these same girls might be meeting their boyfriends at the disco later on. She mentions her cousins who were held up as models of female virtue, personifying everything which Maninder failed to be while growing up. Now, several years later, she feels vindicated as her cousins are living

with their non-Sikh boyfriends, much to their parents' shame. In Maninder's opinion "there's definitely a break away from religion already, I give it another three or four years to come and there will be no such thing as that".

When I asked her whether this would be a good thing, she said: "Yes, because a lot of people should be allowed to do [their] own thing whether it's good for them or bad for them, they should be allowed to do it for themselves and learn by their mistakes."

On the subject of choosing a partner, Maninder is ambiguous. She has been abandoned by a lover she chose herself, and has seen arranged marriages break down; two of her friends have been married off in haste by their parents upon the discovery that they had boyfriends, only to divorce a few years later. How, she wonders, can one tell after a couple of meetings whether a man will be suitable?

"How are you meant to know? Oh yes, he looks nice, he looks very westernised, oh yes, he's got a good job. It's not because it's his fault or my fault; what if your personalities clash, so what are you meant to do?"

But she hasn't rejected the idea totally: "I would marry an Indian definitely, if my Mum arranged me a guy from here and if I knew him or seen him, if I could get one that was ok." She feels the pressure to make a suitable match before her ill, elderly father dies, and hankers after approval from her mother and the wider community.

### **Losing Touch with India**

When she was 22, Maninder got engaged to a Christian man which horrified her parents. They took her on a trip to India, which eventually lasted

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for three and a half years. From being a reckless youngster whose parents couldn't control her, Maninder had to become a teetotal, non-smoking,

dutiful Punjabi daughter, who spent her days washing clothes, cleaning the house and preparing food. "I was just a housewife for three and a half years." In order to cope with the sudden loss of nicotine and alcohol she started to drink her tea at double strength, a practice which she continues, reminding her sister to put two tea bags in her cup.

Maninder says of her mother



Kaushal Shrivastava

during that time: "She was so used to me having my independence here, she actually came down on me like a ton of bricks over there and she knew I couldn't do anything about it".

In Scotland, Maninder had felt that her mother had no sanctions to persuade her to conform, whereas in the Punjab the situation was dramatically different, as almost everyone in the village would back her mother in a confrontation. Maninder describes feeling self-conscious about her cut hair, and in front of Khalsa Sikhs she was positively fearful. She wore dark glasses much of the time to cover up her difficulty in keeping her eyes modestly downcast. After one year in the village Maninder returned for a short time to Glasgow to discover that her boyfriend had got tired of waiting and found another woman. Despite the hardships, she says, she suffered in the village, she returned there for another two and a half years, because her parents had become ill and needed nursing care. Her parents cannot have planned to get ill, but they may have hoped that their daughter's marriage plans, of which they disapproved, would fall through.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Maninder says she never wants to live in India again "Never, ever, I don't care if I had the most money in the world and could live like a queen over there but I'd never go back to that place."

She regrets the toll she feels that India took on her health through infections of malaria, and tuberculosis, and she regrets the loss of the fiance who could not wait for her return. On the other hand, she says, she would not

have missed looking after her parents "for the world", as it brought her closer to them. And she misses village people, especially one family who helped her to nurse her mother through a nervous breakdown. She misses the daily routines. "I just miss that life." She also feels that she has gained an understanding of what it means to be Indian which she lacked before.

Of her younger sister, she says: "She doesn't feel Indian at all...I



didn't feel it until I went to India and I understand things a wee bit more. I mean, I can see the other side of it now because I felt being Indian over there. I'm not so ignorant towards it. But whereas like arranged marriage [I used to think] No way man, that's like rape, now I understand how and why. Not to say that I'd like one."

Maninder says she does not feel 'properly' Indian, explaining to me that "we're not a typical Indian family. We haven't got the mentality of Indian people." On the other hand she still lives with her family of eight siblings and parents and expresses

strong disapproval of another sister who lives on her own in a flat. She sees herself as a fighter who will not be defeated by the moral majority of the Sikh community. Unlike Aysha who derives support and guidance from her belief, Maninder feels that her religion is only used to oppress her, with what she regards as arbitrary rulings. "What's wrong with showing your legs? I don't understand it." Neither will she be defeated by the difficulties of living in a racist society. "When they call you a 'Paki', I say 'No, I'm Indian'. That's the best one." But she also sees herself as failing to fit into either community.

"It is quite hard [when] you've been brought up in two worlds and you can't turn to any particular one because you can't go that way because they won't have it, so it's total conflict all the time."

### Negotiating an Identity

Maninder and Aysha do not conform to the stereotypes of British Asian women, because they are both engaged in a process of negotiation and compromise with those who would shape their lives. Aysha's negotiation has involved much less conflict than Maninder's, because what she wants from life largely coincides with what her elders and peers consider appropriate. Nevertheless there are some issues on which she will not compromise, such as her daughter and her sons receiving equal treatment in the family and in their education. Maninder has not worked out her terms for negotiation with the same clarity as Aysha; she is still undecided



about how much she is prepared to compromise her vision of an ideal partner in order to give her parents the satisfaction of getting her married.

Both women are working to integrate the expectations they have brought from their Scottish and their Punjabi worlds. Sometimes this is easy when the two do not have conflict: women staying at home to care for children while their husbands go out to work is acceptable both in Britain and the Punjab. At other times they need to justify their expectations more forcefully. Maninder's view that wearing skirts does not constitute a breaking of her moral code is constantly challenged, and she is prepared to argue her case. In this process of negotiation Aysha, Maninder and women like them are shaping a new Scottish Punjabi culture in which traditional ways of understanding and dealing with the world are adapted to cope with life in Glasgow.

As long as British society has a racist element, women of Indian origin will have at least one oppressor in common. Relations between Sikhs and Muslims in Britain come under pressures that are very different from those experienced in India and Pakistan. In Scotland, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus are often forced to consider their commonalities by a society which stereotypes them as one homogeneous group. Racism is always to be condemned, but it may have one positive effect in Britain when it forces people to recognise what they have in common. Over the next decade, many young women who have grown up in Scotland will be reaching marriageable age, and trying to find ways of staying within their parents' communities without compromising their own sense of morality. The culture which these women's children inherit is going to be very different from the one their mothers passed on to them. □

## ***Bone by Bone***

*Had it been a love affair  
however short, I would  
still have distilled  
a number of poems in its  
celebration; and at its  
inevitable end  
ranted and rationalised long  
enough to salvage  
a whole volume of poetry.  
Why then does my grieving  
over you to others  
seem to be so long? We were  
together, mother, for fifty-three  
years and one in which  
you formed me bone by bone.*

## ***If Mothers Live***

*Mothers must not be  
allowed to die.  
In feeling,  
in mind,  
in words of poetry,  
keep them going,  
they are all we have  
of immortality;  
they are  
what a root means in  
a felled tree-  
the trunk may  
leaf again  
if mothers live.*

**Sunita Jain**