



# Return migrants in Pakistan

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## About ippr

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## The re-migration project

This case study of return migration from the UK to Pakistan was conducted as part of ippr's re-migration research, exploring emigration among the UK's immigrants. Case studies were also conducted in Ghana, New Zealand, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. These countries were selected in order to ensure the research reflected a cross section of return experiences and a mix of migration profiles.

Each research team case reviewed existing relevant literature and data on return migration to the country, especially from the UK. They conducted 20 life history interviews with returnees. All the studies aimed to recruit a range of respondents that broadly reflected the profile of returned and onward migrants from the UK in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, employment status, reason for migrating to the UK and reason for migrating to the case study country.

The case studies provide a qualitative insight into migrants' motivations and experiences of return, and do not seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics and impacts of return to these countries.

The interviews explored the following areas:

- Participants' motivation for moving to the UK
- Participants' experiences of living, working and studying in the UK
- Participants' motivations for and experiences of leaving the UK and returning to home country
- Participants' life in their home country since returning
- Participants' sense of identity and links to the UK.

## 1. Background: Pakistanis in the UK

According to ippr analysis of 2006 Labour Force Survey data, the country that sends the fourth highest number of migrants to the UK is Pakistan (ippr 2007).

With a large settled population of Pakistani origin in the UK along with newcomers, those with Pakistani heritage in Britain are among the most conspicuous groups of overseas origin.

The first generation of Pakistani migrants to the UK mainly settled in the 1960s (most entering via a voucher system); the next group is made up of their UK-born children and their spouses, many of whom come from Pakistan, followed by many new migrants who come with work permits, study visas or as dependants.

The Immigration Act of 1971, which came into effect in 1973, introduced a system of annually renewable work permits for non-Britons granted entry to work. This represented a significant change from the automatic right to settle that New Commonwealth workers had enjoyed under the voucher system of the 1960s (Ahmad 2008a). For some, the change in immigration policy in 1973, together with the recession and the subsequent wave of redundancies affecting the UK textile industry, in which most Pakistanis were employed, signalled the end of an era.

But although the new laws impacted on the way in which Pakistanis chose to move to the UK, they did not abate the flow. In 2004, for instance, 212,000 Pakistani nationals were admitted into the UK. Around half were visitors; 6 per cent (12,600) were students; 3.5 per cent (7,590) were spouses; and 1.5 per cent were work permit holders and their dependents (3,265) (Ahmad 2008a). According to Ahmad (ibid) the number of UK work permits given to Pakistanis is increasing to the extent that it is higher than in the 1960s, popularly considered the 'era of the work permit'.

In 2004, 1,710 Pakistanis applied for asylum to the UK, the fifth highest number among the applying national groups (Home Office 2004, quoted in Ahmad 2008b). Currently, alongside the regulated flows, there are a large number of irregular migrants, roughly around 10,000 (ibid).

The Pakistani population resident in UK has therefore quite a varied composition.

Pakistan in 2009 remains a developing country, born from one of the biggest migrations in history: in 1947, following partition from India, millions of people moved into the new state. Although Pakistan has a high GDP, its economy is plagued by many other problems. For example, inflation increased from 6.9 per cent in 2007 to 11 per cent in the first few months of 2008. The country has been heavily affected by its ongoing confrontation with India and more recently with the Afghan crisis, and the Pakistani government has in the past tried to use emigration as a relief from social emergencies (Noman 1991).

The Gulf boom in the 1970s, which occurred alongside many crises in Pakistan, gave work to many of the country's unemployed, providing a flow of remittances of such large extent that some believed they would counteract the negative effects on urban workers of the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship.

In the 1970s migration from Pakistan was much more heterogeneous than migration that occurred in the 1960s, when mostly Punjabis and Kashmiris moved to Britain through the voucher system (see Bolognani 2007). In the '70s Pathans were one of the ethnic groups that made up a significant part of the workers moving to the Gulf. Many of them returned to Pakistan in the 1980s following their dismissal as Gulf countries looked for more skilled manpower.

## 2. About this report

This report presents the results of 21 interviews with individuals who were part of the new wave of migration to Britain following the 1973 Immigration Act (apart from one individual who joined her father before that year) and who have now returned to Pakistan. There is no statistical data on the extent of returns to Pakistan available. (Although the last Pakistani Census [1998] provides the details of migration to each district this combines internal and foreign migration and is not of use to this study.)

Most interviews have been anonymised at the requests of the interviewees and their quotes have not been significantly altered, in order to retain the flavour of their spoken English.

This qualitative study tries to reflect as much as possible the ethnic composition of the new migration wave to Britain. But due to security issues posed by the unstable political situation in Pakistan at the beginning of 2008, most of the North West Frontier Province had to be excluded from the research, together with the interior Sindh and Balochistan provinces. Most of the research population came from urban areas: Karachi in Sindh, Islamabad, Lahore, Multan and Sarghoda in Punjab, and Abbottabad in the Northern Frontier Province. All of the population from rural areas came from the Mirpur District in Azad Kashmir: this was decided because people from this region made up most of the first wave migration, linked to the voucher system and the textile industry in the UK, and it is still a centre of emigration due to the very high rates of marriage between citizens from the Mirpur District and people in Britain (Bolognani 2007).

The interviewees present a variety of migration experiences, ranging from work-related migration, to studying, to having dependents in Britain and even being deported. The interviews were conducted in English in Lahore and Karachi, and in English and Punjabi in Kashmir. In the cities they were mainly conducted with middle and upper class people, and in the rural areas mainly with working class people.

The researcher attempted to find additional individuals who had gone to the UK for work by networking and using a 'snowball effect' through private home servants but this approach proved unsuccessful. Most of those workers had relatives or friends who had been to the Middle East or South Africa for work, but they did not know anybody who had recently migrated to the UK (and had come back) for work. They thought this was because British immigration laws are now difficult to navigate and how much easier and better-paid unskilled work is in the Gulf, for instance.

There are number of illegal Pakistani migrants in London. These individuals were unsuitable for our research because their state of illegality makes it difficult for them to return to Pakistan. Ahmad (2008b), describes the working lives of many of these migrants, and confirms the Home Office's projections of their numbers (Home Office 2004).

The sample shows a strong gender bias, with only five women out of 21 interviewees. As most women move for reasons of study or to join their husbands, they provide a less varied sample than the men, who are more likely to move for long- and short-term work. For this reason the sample recruitment was biased towards men in order to show a larger variety of experiences.

Table 1. Interviewees' profiles

Name	Gender	Age	Place of birth	Place of residence	Education	Nationality	When left the UK
Tabassum	Female	50	Gujarat	Lahore	MA in Sociology and History	British	1995
Moeen	Male	32	Lahore	Lahore	MA in Law and LLB	Pakistani	2002
Fazil	Male	31	Multan	Multan	MA in Law	Pakistani	2007
Laila	Female	34	Lahore	Lahore	MA in Politics and LLB	Pakistani and Canadian	1999
Tariq	Male	38	Rawalpindi	Abbottabad	MSC PhD	Pakistani	2001
Faisal	Male	40s	Karachi	Islamabad	MBA	Pakistani	2000
Imtiaz	Male	30s	Sargodha	Mirpur	LLM	Pakistani and British	2007
Mohd. Akram	Male	56	Mirpur	Mirpur	5th grade	Pakistani and British	2008
Hajji Sahib	Male	60	Mirpur	Mirpur	No formal education	Pakistani and British	1988
Naheed	Female	48	Lahore	Lahore	MBBS/MRCP	Pakistani	2006
Anila	Female	27	Peshawar	Lahore	MBA	Pakistani	2007
Iqbal	Male	48	Mirpur	Mirpur	n.a.	Pakistani and British	2005
Mohd Younas	Male	30s	Mirpur	Mirpur and Dubai	Metric	Pakistani (resident status in UAE)	2008
Javed	Male	40	Mirpur	Mirpur	10th grade	Pakistani	2006
Saad	Male	20s	Mirpur	Mirpur	n.a.	Pakistani	2008
Salman	Male	50s	Mirpur	Mirpur	n.a.	Pakistani and British	2002
Shazib	Male	39	Sarghoda	Lahore	MBA	Pakistani	2000
Fawzia	Female	47	London	Karachi	BA	Pakistani and British	1983
Afsar	Male	23	Karachi	Karachi	BBA	Pakistani	2006
Sarfaraz	Male	70	Delhi	Karachi	Intermediate	Pakistani	1986
Shahid Sahib	Male	56	n.a.	Karachi	BA	Pakistani	2006

### 3. Moving to the UK

The interviewees reported the following reasons for migration to the UK:

- Study
- Joining a family member
- Marriage
- Work
- Gaining life experience.

In none of the interviews was work given as the primary reason for migration. Work was in general used as a reason in tandem with study or marriage, for instance. However, most of the sample found a job in Britain after joining a family member, getting married or finishing their studies.

Most interviewees mentioned gaining 'life experience' as a reason for migrating, alongside one of the more practical reasons:

*'I thought for years I would like to have an experience abroad more for cultural knowledge and life experience than strictly for education.'* (Moeen, male, 32, Professor, Lahore)

In a later section it will be discussed how most interviewees wished that their children would go to study in the UK one day, even if the education system in Pakistan improved, because experience in the UK is seen as shaping a better character:

*'Going to the UK made some changes in my personality and lifestyle, positive changes. If I hadn't gone I would be the same person. It has not changed my nature, but I have developed some positive aspects in my personality.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

#### Reasons for choosing the UK above other countries

Most of the interviewees had very clear ideas on why they had chosen the UK rather than any other country. Cricketers among the interviewees were aware, for instance, that the practice of employing and paying an overseas player is well established in the UK, while other countries such as Australia do not do this. The individuals who left to study had headed to a particular place (for example the London School of Economics, which is renowned worldwide) or had come to study subjects including Law because the system was the most similar to Pakistan's:

*'I was interested in Law, and because of this reason, us being a colony, our legal system is very similar (as it is originally from there). I think that all of our successful lawyers have studied in the UK. There are also some cultural similarities i.e. we speak English.'* (Imtiaz, male, thirties, lawyer, Mirpur)

Moeen's  
memorabilia



For the individuals from rural areas the main reason for choosing the UK was the presence of extended family there. This process can be described as 'chain migration' (Bolognani 2007): honorary kinship is awarded to a person's closest friends in the process of migration, which sociologists call the 'biraderi of recognition', or 'extended family of recognition'. The case of Mohd Younas is a good example. In 2000 he went to the UK from Dubai to attend a cousin's wedding and stayed in Nottingham for two months. Later, a friend from Peterborough who was a railway clerk wrote a sponsor letter for him, and Mohd Younas went again in 2003 and stayed for two months. He went again in 2004, for four months, again sponsored by a friend. After another brief stay in the United Arab Emirates he went back to the UK again and stayed for five months. All of his visas had been sponsored by friends. In 2006 he applied for a visitor visa without a sponsor and was granted it in 2007 but he was deported for benefit fraud five months later.

## Expectations and practical arrangements

Individuals who migrated after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were expecting tough treatment from the immigration police, but they did not find this to be the case. Mohd Younas, for instance, recalled how when he landed at Manchester airport after 2001, not able to speak English, the authorities helped him to find his way to his relatives' house. This positive view also came through in Mo Akram's accounts of his migration process, which was sponsored by his father who was already in UK. He claimed that a few years later it was the police who suggested he should 'bring the wife over' from Pakistan and they helped him in the application process.

Only one interviewee, Anila, said that she had not expected to encounter the discrimination she did in the end, but this may have been an elaboration of her negative experience in socialising with her neighbours (British and Pakistanis) as she was unable to provide any precise example apart from being shouted at by a drunken lout in front of a club.

Interviewees claimed that in general, the bureaucratic procedure for moving to the UK is quite well known and they did not need further advice before leaving from either authorities or friends:

*'They [the British authorities] were so helpful at every step that it really didn't... I really didn't need any advice either.'* (Naheed, female, 48, doctor, Lahore)

Help in settling in the UK came from family and friends. Staying with people who were close to you either because of cultural commonalities or previous acquaintance was by some considered a big plus, although a few tried to avoid staying with close relations in order to feel more independent. Imtiaz had been offered campus accommodation, for instance, but he felt that it was easier to live with Pakistani friends. Fazil said that when he showed signs of discomfort and loneliness, his first UK cricket club in London arranged an exchange of players so that he could move to the Blackpool area where most of his colleagues from Pakistan were playing. Once there, however, he tried to put some distance between himself and his mother's cousin's family, as he wanted to enjoy the freedom of the place without repercussions for his reputation in the family circle.

Similarly, Afsar says:

*'I met family twice or thrice over two years but because I had to; I wasn't really crazy about meeting them.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

Most of the interviewees from the more recent wave of migration said that they already had quite a good idea of what Britain would be like because they knew many people who had been there before. Laila suggested, however, that cultural references had affected her expectations of what she would find in Britain:

*'When I went there, there was no possibility there was no notion of it having anything to offer to stay there beyond studying. Once I was there I could imagine it, though. It is strange because once I was there I could imagine I could live there, we both ideally wanted to stay there. I had a romantic sense about the UK, period drama, Victorian England, an anglophile sensibility, through literature and films. It was a place of great possibility but only when I thought of it as a limited experience that you have to go there, you could go there to study, it would be great. I wanted to study there for the sheer romance of it. There was this notion that this was the pinnacle of learning, it was where you went when you wanted to do scholarly work. I did my undergraduate in Canada. The time I spent in England had nothing to do with what I had imagined, as in fact I did not meet many English people.'* (Laughs) (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

## 4. Living in the UK

The idea of a white Britain was the main expectation that was proved wrong once migrants had made the move. A recurrent feature in the interviews was in fact appreciation of multiculturalism in Britain, and this constituted one of the main attractions for what has already been called the ‘life experience’ aspect of migration.

Students like Tariq, studying in Scotland, lived in accommodation where there were many nationalities. Faisal said he knew many African students and Imtiaz many Russians. Relations were not always easy with them, but this provided worthwhile life experience nevertheless. The South Asian infiltration of Britain was also surprising:

*‘In London I spent a lot of time in an area which was so Punjabi in nature that it would take me five minutes in the morning to realize I wasn’t in Lahore.’* (Moeen, male, 32, Professor, Lahore)

### Positive aspects of life in the UK

Multiculturalism was, then, definitely one of the main positive aspects of Britain that people cited and one they equated with the country. This was true for the students attending colleges that are known to be very multicultural; but it also true for individuals such as Javed, a man from a village in the Mirpur District in Azad Kashmir, educated to 10th grade, who spent time in Nottingham, Peterborough and Oldham:

*‘Koi Sikh hai, Koi Essai hai, Koi Mochi hai , Koi Nayee hai, Udher such kuch barabar hai.’* (Somebody is a Sikh, Somebody is a Christian, Somebody is a cobbler and somebody is a barber. For them everybody is equal.) (Javed, male, 40, unemployed, Mirpur)

Perhaps even more poetically, Anila described the British diversity in this way:

*‘They have a lot of variety in everything. In attitudes, in people, in shopping, in places to visit.’* (Anila, female, 27, teacher, Lahore)

The interviewees appeared to make a clear demarcation of ‘good areas’ and ‘bad areas’ where Pakistanis may feel welcome and secure or not. Provided that the demarcation was respected, racist encounters seemed to be quite easily avoided. The strong sense of the rule of law<sup>1</sup> being prevalent in Britain confirmed interviewees’ notion that even if they had encountered racism, the authorities would have been on their side and they have very good words for the police force:

*‘There was some racism present, but only Britishers from some specific areas there were like that and it was towards everybody else: Blacks, Russians etc. It is a contained phenomenon because of the strong laws against it. I always felt I could have sued if I had experienced something along these lines because there you have rights.’* (Imtiaz, male, thirties, lawyer, Mirpur)

Racial and social equality, together with education and law and order, were the most celebrated positive aspects of life in Britain. Mo Akram called this the ‘valuing of human life’, saying: ‘An English dog is more human than a Member of Parliament [is] here [in Pakistan]’.

Saad, who went to England after marrying a first cousin in Bradford but discovered when going back to Mirpur on holiday that she had not renewed his visa, had very negative words for his in-laws (their house was described as ‘kaed khana’, a prison), but very positive views about the country and the way the police handled him, even comparing his detention centre in Britain with a five-star hotel:

1. With the development of the Lawyers’ movement in Pakistan between 2007 and 2008, the idea of the ‘rule of law’ became prevalent in Pakistan. This may be one of the reasons why this theme was so popular among interviewees.

*‘Wahan zindagi bohot zabardast hai. Wahan par, insaan ki bohot kadam hoti hai.’*  
(Life is really amazing there. There human life is really valued.) (Saad, male, twenties, unemployed, Mirpur)



The humanity of the British environment was emphasised by Tabassum and Shazeb. The former regretted the fact that Pakistan had scarce facilities for her autistic son, and the latter, who has a muscular genetic problem, found life to be much easier in Britain. These judgements were not only based on the comparison between the infrastructure and medical care in Britain and in Pakistan, but also on the comparison between the respect and consideration for the individual and the treatment of disabled people as second-class citizens in Pakistan.

Politics was also a recurrent feature in describing the positive sides of the life in England, as this vision of the New Labour Government showed:

*‘Politics there is very strong. If a politician gets blamed, he straightaway resigns. Look at Tony Blair: people weren’t happy with him about the Iraq War and he resigned.’* (Mohd Akram, male, 56, retired, Mirpur)

Freedom and lack of censorship also rated as very important, as narrated by Fazil:

*‘When I left I missed England, [...] the social life, definitely you get better social life there, different places for day out, for night out, England has got something for everyone. Here, you don’t have places. I want to go out, relax somewhere... I miss it.’* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

Two aspects may surprise: food and weather, stereotypically negative images of Britain, were some of the positive features as recounted by the interviewees. The cold weather was considered a positive aspect, perhaps because the interviews were being conducted in a period of heavy load shedding (intentionally-engineered electrical power outages) in Pakistan where for many hours a day families with no generators had to cope without air conditioning or fans. The wide choice of foods (especially cheese and in some cases wine) and cuisines in the UK also made the interviewees nostalgic.

The financial aspects of living in the UK were no straightforward matter. On one hand the UK was still seen as a place for opportunity, but this was strongly linked to the notion of sheer hard work:

*‘The life there is a lot better in the UK, but you have to work and earn a living. People who go now don’t want to come back. If somebody wants to go there to study, work and make something of their life, then they should but if they just want to go and chill then there is no point.’* (Mohd Akram, male, 56, retired, Mirpur)

The presence of a welfare system was also appreciated, but with the knowledge that it does not necessarily allow one to live a good life, and in the case of being unemployed, being this way in Pakistan seemed to be more desirable for some, as at least there, it was thought, you could spend time with friends and enjoy your free time more.

### Negative aspects

The idea that friendships develop in a different and less desirable manner in the UK was a constant theme in the interviews. Tabassum recalled how she had to make appointments in advance to see her friends in Glasgow, while in Lahore everybody is always free to see you.

*‘Life in Britain is very fast track. You can’t stop anyone there and ask for the time, they will say: “I don’t have time to tell you the time”.’* (Salman, male, 50, retired, Mirpur)

For more recent migrants this different intensity of friendship was the cause of much homesickness and they felt that attempts to make friends with British Pakistanis were often unsuccessful as they were too different and too closed within their own communities. Tabassum thought that when she recently visited her father who was still living in Glasgow, she had noticed a level of Islamification among British Pakistanis that made her uncomfortable.

Overall, the interviewees were not able to think of very many negative aspects to life in the UK, especially as they recognised distinctions between classes and areas and how people behaved differently across those lines. Imtiaz, however, was certain of one thing: no matter how much he liked living in the UK, he would bring up his children in Pakistan until they were old enough to deal with a culture like the UK's:

*'You cannot raise your children there. The rules and the environment are such that I would prefer to raise my children here [in Pakistan] at least for the first few years. You can't even shout at a child there, he can call the police.'* (Imtiaz, male, thirties, lawyer, Mirpur)

Anila was the most critical of Britain among the interviewees, but her comments regarded mostly her settlement process, rather than life in the UK in general:

*'[Britain] should have more activities for people who are finding it difficult to settle down... especially women who are married, or even who are single, as they might find it more difficult to settle there so they should help them more... [The women] don't have much to do so it would be better if they had some activity to be a part of.'* (Anila, female, 27, teacher, Lahore)

### Social networks between the UK and Pakistan

Regardless of whether people were more or less happy in Britain, contact with home was always very frequent, even before the internet became popular. Laila and Tabassum recalled the numerous holidays back home:

*'We would come back frequently so there was this continuing relationship and familiarity with grandparents and cousins.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

Some authors have actually seen these short-term returns as laying a 'trail' for an eventual return or as something that led to the idea of moving back to Pakistan (Ali and Holden 2006), although there is no clear evidence of that in this piece of research. Having a strong tie with the home country, however, did not seem to impinge on the socialisation process in Britain:

*'Friends were a sort of mixed band. I had Asian friends and now with the course of time I really have developed strong social ties, it is like my second home. I have some really nice proper English, not by passport, by blood, friends. People everywhere in England are friendly, but they are extra friendly if you know them. When I started living with my [cricket team] captain on the weekend I had learnt a lot of the British way of life, inside the house it was their private life I cannot object to anything, but my captain was very well disciplined, I did not find anything objectionable.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)



In general, friendships took different forms depending on whether individuals migrated there as children or as adults. As a child, Tabassum and Mo Akram used to go to a multi-racial school and they made British friends from all paths of life, only encountering cultural problems sporadically; for example, Tabassum was not able to dance at her end-of-year ball because her otherwise liberal father drew the line at dancing and mixing with boys. The interviewees who went to Britain as students instead seemed to mainly mix with other foreigners, and those who migrated for marriage tended to socialise within their extended family.

Cheap accommodation which some of the interviewees tried to access was reported as often being located in neighbourhoods they deemed 'unsuitable'. But even in better neighbourhoods they would not feel comfortable – for example, both Mo Akram and Mo Younas, from rural backgrounds in Azad Kashmir, thought that the real problems with socialising in Britain were the language barrier and people's prejudices, both from the British towards Pakistanis and vice versa. Mo Younas mentioned a Pakistani neighbour of his who would proudly make a point of not speaking with a 'gora' (white man).

## Working in the UK

Work environments were generally considered to be very safe. This was mainly connected with two concepts we have already mentioned: respect for human life and the rule of law:

*'What their law says, they don't change that. They stick with it. In the UK you don't have to pay to get a job like you have to in Pakistan. If you deserve the job and they think you can perform, you will get the job. It doesn't matter if you are English or Pakistani. Even after 9/11 this hasn't changed.'* (Mohd Akram, male, 56, retired, Mirpur)

*'The managers take care of you, if you are working slowly they don't scold you but politely ask you if something is wrong and if something isn't wrong he will politely tell him that he's working slowly. And if [a person] was even a little bit sick they would send him home.'* (Javed, male, 40, unemployed, Mirpur)

In contrast to earlier experiences of migrants, for the interviewees friends and family did not seem to be the most influential in providing job opportunities, unless a person had arrived as a *mangeter* (literally 'fiancé' and by extension somebody who has come to Britain thanks to a marriage). This kind of experience, however, was not always smooth. Saad, for example, got a job in a bakery through his in-laws, only to have his salary directly transferred to them. Saad has now been deported and is awaiting an appeal trial, but he said that he thought that he could have got on in life off his own back: he said he believed that in Pakistan one needed a very good education to land a good job, but in England one could live well even without a degree.

Both Tariq and Imtiaz found work thanks to their academic connections, as did Dr Naheed, a strong supporter of what she called the 'British professionalism' she experienced as she went through medical school and then when working as a hospital doctor in the UK.

## Studying in the UK

One of the few areas in which the interviewees made criticisms was further education. Although the ones who went to England to study had been dreaming of it for a very long time, their overall impression was not as positive as they would have imagined. According to both Laila and Imtiaz, attending elite universities in the UK did indeed give them an advantage in terms of having a degree from a 'brand name' institution, but they did not feel that it gave them a special level of knowledge. Imtiaz found that his Law studies were much easier in London than they had been in Pakistan:

*'They only have more teaching aids and technology, but Law is better taught in Pakistan.'* (Imtiaz, male, thirties, lawyer, Mirpur)

This mirrored Laila's comments on her less than satisfactory experience during her course:

*'My degree in Canada was less of a commercial enterprise. [The London School of Economics] was a great disappointment. I had this idea of a bastion of different politics, and it is definitely not, it is a money making machine. It was not deeply challenging in any way.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

However, Laila said that studying at the LSE had provided her with a great experience overall, great resources and also a degree that in her opinion was more important than her Canadian postgraduate in securing a good job in Pakistan:

*'My experience in the UK was important because the MA meant a lot. That was the thing about being in LSE even if I was disappointed at the course. I still think that that degree mattered [in securing the job in Pakistan] more than the other from Canada.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

Experiences of studying were generally appreciated more when they were from less well-known institutions. The interviewees went with fewer expectations but considered their lecturers to be very sympathetic and hard-working, along with excellent infrastructure and a great intellectual stimulus. Shazib, who did an MBA in London specialising in banking, commented:

*'Although Pakistan is said to be an Islamic country, a Muslim country, I could find more support for [Islamic Banking] in the UK than in Pakistan. I got the liberty to do research, the liberty to speak, the liberty to write, and the best thing that I like was that all the study was research based. Pakistan does not offer any research based Masters Degree.'* (Shazib, male, 39, corporate banker, Lahore)

The theme of the rule of law penetrated views on education, too:

*'The system is well defined, it has a lot of merits and it has lots of advantages compared to the Pakistani system. In the Pakistani system there is a lot of cheating when exams come, the British system is more developed, advanced, more comprehensive and thorough.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

Tariq and Dr Naheed liked the British teaching style, the level of personal attention given to students and the amount of interest professors took in individual development and felt that this would not have been the same if they had studied in Pakistan.

Even the less-educated interviewees who had some English language tuition had quite a good impression of the teaching methods used. They mentioned field trips and multidisciplinary and fun approaches as the best features.

## 5. 'No country for old men': leaving the UK

Apart from the interviewees who moved to Britain for marriage reasons, most of them had planned to go back to Pakistan having achieved their educational and professional targets.



*'At times I felt homesick, at times I felt like staying in the UK for long. When I used to come here I used to miss the UK. It is a mixture of both. I liked Britain more and more as I stayed there. It is a great place for people who are young, but the society is not very conducive to settle down to invite your parents to stay. The society is very fragmented, the family system is not strong, there is no system of extended family, so if you want the best of both worlds you should go and study there, go and have holidays there, but live here. If you have better economic prospects here you never think of moving there. The thought did cross my mind but compared to the wealth I have got here: house, family, family connections, to reach this level there it would take many years, and I already have these things here for free.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

*'If you come from Pakistan and India and you don't think once of moving there, it is unreal. Because it is a totally different life. You get treated well, you have all the facilities, the real rule of law and you have really, really civilised society, I think every person would wish to live in such a civilised society but I had to think what I am going to get and what I am going to lose. In Pakistan I am from a very good respectable family, so I am good here, if I had settled in UK I wouldn't have gained too much financially with respect to here, because I have all the facilities. I would wish to settle there only because of society, you get peace of mind there. I can't think of anything I don't like in UK. Never considered moving to England because I really love my family. If I move to England I would lose a lot, my parents, my siblings, my culture, my homeland, everything.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

The decision to return was therefore a complicated one. On the one hand, there is the potential of good earnings in absolute terms if one stayed in the UK, but on the other the interviewees knew from experience that they can live better relatively speaking in Pakistan on lower earnings. Financial calculations aside, the great respect and admiration that most interviewees showed for Britain, its rule of law, its valuing of human life and professionalism in the work place counteracted the pull factors from home. Among the latter, family ties were very important, but were not crucial in making the final decision:

*'If my parents had been there [in Britain], that would have been different, I might have stayed. But I know people who have parents there but they still want to come back to Pakistan. [I have a friend who did that], I suppose she wanted to come back to her roots and she has never regretted it. She got married but because of the ethnic violence [in Karachi], that prompted her to go back.'* (Fawzia, female, 47, housewife, Karachi)

Out of the interviewees that expressed the strongest fondness for Britain, Tabassum and Dr Naheed had to return because of their parents' and parents-in-law's health, but they said they could have settled in the UK for good. Generally parents seemed very unlikely to join their children in Britain except for very short holidays, in spite of the better care they would get. Tabassum's case was, however, quite unique. She migrated to Glasgow when she was of pre-school age following her father, who was disillusioned with Pakistan and had had a bad business experience there, and as a result did not want to return other than for holidays. Thirteen years ago, however, Tabassum's husband, who was also from Pakistan, decided that together with their four children they should start a new life back home and at the same time look after his old parents. Tabassum, who would have been classified by then as a second-generation British Pakistani, agreed to return even though her own father still did not consider it an option.

Hajji Sahib, a former textile mill worker in Bradford, was interviewed in his new home back in Pakistan, in a small village in the Mirpur District of Azad Kashmir. After 20 years in Bradford he wanted to return as he was 'disgusted' by the morals of Britain. He had to leave his children behind as they would only visit his village, not wishing to ever move there permanently. Hajji Sahib had missed his village life intensely although he had found meaningful activities to engage himself in in the UK, such as participating in the revivalist and missionary Islamic movement Tableeghi Jamaat. Hajji Sahib still knew only a very few words in English, and his nostalgia and homesickness are common feelings even among younger and better-integrated Pakistanis. What that sense of nostalgia consists of is quite difficult to describe, however:

*'The most positive aspect of going back home was home.'* (Laughs) (Fawzia, female, 47, housewife, Karachi)

This feeling was also common among the staunchest supporters of Britain such as Shazeb, which appeared to show that for most returnees to Pakistan, a situation of dual citizenship, or being able to strike a balance between the two countries, was desirable.

Laila gave a political account of her choice to return:

*'I still think whatever I do in this context it holds greater meaning for me. It is not because it is leading to anything in particular. But I think if there is a little effort on my part, I think it is an emotive thing, that I think (the effort should be) here more than anywhere else.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

(In other words, although Laila has little hope that she can do anything about Pakistan, she still thinks that putting an effort into doing something politically or socially there has an intrinsic value, an emotional value for her, so she still prefers getting into politics there than anywhere else.)

Two interviewees were forcefully repatriated, one because of benefit fraud and the other because of alleged violence against his British Pakistani wife. These individuals were perhaps the ones who celebrated and longed the most for Britain. They repeatedly talked about a sense of having 'unfinished business' there, as if they had not achieved the full potential from the land of opportunities that Britain still represents to some. Not only had these individuals left children behind, but they also felt as if they had been separated from opportunities too early and they had come back with a sense of shame for not being able to make the most of that opportunity, having being thrown out instead.

The role of having achieved something in encouraging the decision to return home was stressed by Salman and Shahid Sahib:

*'Once you have achieved the lifestyle you wanted, then you get sick of it [and return].'* (Salman, male, 50, retired, Mirpur)

*'I was very happy to come back because I had achieved what I wanted to.'* (Shahid Sahib, male, 56, corporate banker, Karachi)

*Iqbal's business*



Iqbal may be also considered to be a semi-forced returnee. He migrated to Leeds in 1978 to marry his British-born first cousin and learnt to appreciate the UK more than his own country. However, his brother allegedly forced him to go back to Mirpur to look after the family business, and out of obligation he returned.

In the interviews, financial considerations seemed always to be paired with considerations of a deeper social nature, especially when interviewees were urged to think of what their future would have been like in Britain. At that point most of them painted bleak scenarios of old age, lived in indifference and without affection from others.



Some of the interviewees had experienced living in other countries themselves: Laila lived for many years in Canada, Moeen in the United States and many people from Mirpur had spent spells in Dubai which was a favourite destination for many, as explained by Shahid:

*'There is a big difference going to UK or Dubai. If you go to UK you can't come back as much as you like because your children in education will keep you back there as the children won't want to come, I did not want to make that mistake. In Dubai we could come back many times to visit our family, we were closer to our culture and there were good schools, it was a very good mix.'* (Shahid Sahib, male, 56, corporate banker, Karachi)

## 6. Life back home in Pakistan

Stories of returning home were mixed. For Iqbal, returning with the money he had made in Britain, he was able to successfully invest in his family business. For Tabassum's family the experience was quite different. In spite of returning with the capital generated by selling his business in Scotland, Tabassum's husband experienced many obstacles to building equivalent success in Pakistan. According to Tabassum, corruption, lack of awareness about bureaucracy and the bad quality of goods severely jeopardised their finances and caused much family distress. Despite being deeply disillusioned, her husband refused to move back to Britain and was proud of the fact that the family 'stuck to it', contrasting himself with other examples of failed returns.

Originally from Gujarat, Tabassum's family like many others decided to relocate to a city when they made the decision to go back. This was a very common trend among everybody apart from Mirpuris, who tended to return to their original home districts. Faisal, for example, went from Karachi to Norwich to Islamabad, in search of the best opportunities he could get with his British MBA. This shows that going back to live with one's family was only one of several reasons for returning, with the location of competitive job opportunities often proving more important.

### 'Dubai syndrome'

An interesting aspect of the return was that after some euphoria when first going back, many returnees had to face some degree of disillusionment and even depression. This has been described as 'Dubai syndrome', a 'social and cultural dislocation' (Donnan and Werbner 1991: 16) that causes depressive symptoms throughout the cycle of migration. It was apparent from some of the interviewees' accounts that they had experienced this:

*'It was difficult because I had got used to a lot of little things... the milk, the cheese, the wine. The system of education was quite authoritarian here [in Pakistan] and I found it quite stifling. The power relations between teachers and students... it wasn't the case over there, and here education I found it of much lower quality. I came [to Pakistan] to study business and I think it was a bad decision in hindsight. Moving back to Pakistan was really bad. Negative resistance... it was pressure to integrate, thinking like a Pakistani, becoming religious, attending cultural events, which I was not used to anymore. There is no sport to play, no literary clubs to enjoy, no theatres and I miss a lot of these things, so it made life a bit empty, less entertaining. If things were a little nicer the transition would have been smoother. Just having a good mental attitude helps, which I did not have at the time. You try to make it similar, the same food, going clubbing, nice food, watching foreign movies, but it is just not the same thing.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

*'When I left, I missed England, when I was there I was counting the days to get back home, and once back it was very exciting, for a week, invited to everybody's house. It was an honour for me to have gone to England for cricket, but after a while ... England and Pakistan I think they are two different cultures, you may call them extreme ends and when I came back I started feeling something weird like when I go on the roads and the markets and superstores, that time England was really reminded to me, what kind of service you get there and how people are disciplined on the road, and the social life.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

Moeen and Laila voiced their sense of frustration about social change in Pakistan. They both claimed that in the last year in Pakistan frustration about the political and social situation had grown to the extent that they had started thinking about leaving the country again:

*'Throughout the emergency and the events of last year I also felt it was heartening because you know the history of deep complicity... unfortunately what happened fell far short of the expectations but the pessimism is the incapacity to want to change or give up interest, it is so deep and people are so guarded about wanting to give up*

*whatever they hold. What holds the society together is that you agree to your private property and it is such a deep malaise. It is disheartening. After you have been here for a long period of time you don't expect to be pretty much different and you don't compare it to any other place, although maybe you should.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

Some got involved in a number of organisations, including non-governmental organisations and women's groups, which some described as being part of a social awakening process developed while they were abroad:

*'When I finished high school it was the time of the Gulf War, which meant an awakening, even for non-Muslims. It was not even about culture, it was a political definition of you as a Muslim even if you were not practising. It was defining yourself politically with that identity. A lot of us were going off some way or another to the third world and for me it was natural to come back to Pakistan.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

The social standing of returnees once they are back in Pakistan seems to vary. One of the researchers noticed that when Salman went to his village shop to give his interview for this project, a large number of villagers were there and seemed to look up to him in many respects. However, Fazil was a victim of his experience in the West, as the family of the girl he wanted to marry refused to allow it, for the reason that his sojourns in the UK might have caused him 'possible moral corruption'.

### Bringing the UK back home

With Hajji Sahib being the only exception, all the interviewees seemed to have tried to implement at least at some level some of the social or professional skills they had gained in Britain:

*'My life would have been very different if I had never experienced life in Britain as living in UK afforded me a very different perspective of life in general and it was a diverse experience from which I learned a lot. My exposure to different cultures made me capable of coping better with diversity and change.'* (Anila, female, 27, teacher, Lahore)

They tried to put some of the 'life experience' they had obtained to use, but this was not always successful:

*'I had learnt a lot from England, especially the society and I tried to implement, and whenever I tried to implement, I got slapped. I tried to trust people, my vision was broadened. I tried but I wasn't successful.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

*'The life here sadly is very different from in England. Life there was about getting out, meeting people and doing things all the time. There is something that happens in terms of what you think about, what you do, when you have chances and opportunities, just meeting different people. And it does not happen here at all, and it is depressing. Here there is a public space to be occupied but it is difficult. I have made a point of going to a café by myself, but... I don't do it very often.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

Dr Naheed claimed that in spite of certain difficulties, it was her utmost objective to carry out what she had learnt in England in terms of professional conduct:

*'I always felt British when in Britain and Pakistani when in Pakistan, but I try to retain good aspects of the British attitude when in Pakistan. These good aspects include being accommodative, soft-spoken, professional, and independent, etc.'* (Naheed, female, 48, doctor, Lahore)

Therefore many different kinds of change were brought back to Pakistan in the lives of the individuals: changes in social, personal, professional and economic attitudes.

Those who had returned to urban settings seemed to gravitate around cosmopolitan environments, both at a personal and professional level. Tabassum, for instance, was now part of what was nicknamed the 'ex-pat club', an informal group of Pakistani female returnees who met periodically to



Dr Naheed's house

socialise and organise charitable events. Fazil said that he was conscious that he tended to spend more time with friends who had also been abroad because he felt they had a more open mentality. Anila was working in an American school where 80 per cent of the faculty and administration was foreign so the diversity was a little like what she had experienced in Britain.

Sometimes changes took place in a much more individual way:

*'I really think that England has really altered the way I think about things. There is something England introduces the possibility of irreverence in your life. British culture is madness, in a nice way, I like it! It reinforces the possibility in having irreverence. Everything is open to be dismissed.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

### Working back at home

While most of the interviewees enjoyed some privileges when they returned, whether because they had graduated from 'brand-name universities' or had strong international work experience, most of them felt that structural problems and the negative aspects of being in a developing country prevented them from realising their full potential, and that this was in contrast with the life characterised by 'peace of mind' (Fazil) they experienced in Britain. Mo Akram for instance described how he had heard of people paying conspicuous bribes (£3,000-5,000) to get jobs and compared that to his very positive experience of the rule of law in work environments in the UK. And as mentioned earlier, Tabassum's husband, in spite of having re-invested all the capital he had brought over, experienced many problems so that he could not achieve anything close to what he had hoped for.

In some cases, the evaluation of the financial outcomes following migration was quite complicated:

*'What I earned was mine, nobody had a share, and I have no responsibilities because I am not married. (I invested the money into my brother-in-law's construction business.) Our business started growing but we kept investing, not taking anything out and after four to five years the business started going reasonably high and through that investment I built the house, and my dad helped me out with one million, the house was three million. But I only get 8,000 PKR a month rent. Now I am working from my dad's law firm. I am a bit indecisive because being an advocate in Pakistan because lawyers' (job) is related to law and order and what is the law and order situation in Pakistan everybody knows. How can you fight for justice when justice is not upheld? I am not comfortable with the judicial system and proceedings.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)



Uncertainty seems to be a very common feature in all the returnees' lives:

*'Uncertainty, hanging, is about this country: is there gonna be water tomorrow? We don't know what is going to happen tomorrow morning, a big strike or shortage of something.'* (Shahid Sahib, male, 56, corporate banker, Karachi)

## 7. Identity and links to the UK

Apart from Hajji Sahib, all the interviewees referred to having experienced some kind of positive effect from their time in Britain and consequently to feeling a privileged link with it:

*'You feel good will towards British society, the British nation, if I ever meet an Englishman I am happy to meet him.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

*'I don't think there is a simple relation between... "who has been to England is now an English agent"... but I still think of course it does bring some instrumental benefit... colonial history is still laudatory in spite of some vitriolic postcolonial history, there is a desire to emulate.'* (Laila, female, 34, lawyer, Lahore)

*'Any person who goes abroad and comes back will be ambassador of that country if he is a decent person. Now there is a sense of globalisation, people want to go to different countries. When you meet a new person you learn something, you learn something from an English person, and the English person may learn from you, especially nowadays is really important because of the perceptions of Pakistan because the media exaggerate.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

This sense, not of belonging, but of having a privileged relationship with the UK, was considered by some to be a possibility for a kind of informal diplomacy:

*'It will help in getting rid of misconceptions about Britain and Britishers that may exist in Pakistan. It may also help in forming better diplomatic relations between the two countries.'* (Naheed, female, 48, doctor, Lahore)

This idea was however jeopardised to an extent by visa policies, which were accused of not taking into sufficient consideration the track records of people who had already been to the UK and who had not exploited the system. There was a slight perceived injustice over the placing of obstacles between a person who had already created links from living in the UK and their desire to go there to visit:

*'After so many years, I now have a five-year visitor visa. Now I can go any time, if anybody gets married, God forbid if somebody dies, I can go at any time, I know a lot of people there now. If [a migrant] does not commit crime, if he does not break the law, he should be able to come to England any time.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

The dominant attitude, however, did not seem to be pushing for more lax immigration laws, but for a system of rewards. Many interviewees supported recent changes to the UK immigration system, especially the introduction of English tests. There seemed to be a sense of fear that uneducated and 'backward' people may give a bad name to Pakistanis, but also a more general sense of how much the UK, which is considered a migration destination by so many people, could cope with the influx:

*'I think UK should encourage more people from good family background to go to UK, because if you give a visa to Tom, Dick and Harry, you will never know. When you interview him I think immigration officer I believe will be capable enough to judge that person. They should see the person physically, talk to him, analyse him and then let him in the country.'* (Fazil, male, 31, lawyer, Multan)

The possibility of freer circulation was also deemed to give practical advantages such as medical care for specific conditions, such as Salman's cancer or Shazeb's muscular problem.

The desire to participate in politics more formally, even just through expressing one's vote, seemed very weak. Fawzia, who holds a British passport, did not even know that she had the right to vote; many others found it difficult to vote in Britain because they did not agree with any of the three main parties, and they did not vote in Pakistan as they were disgusted with the political corruption.

## 8. Living a 'global lifestyle'

This report has described the two main waves of migration, in the 1960s, and more recently.

The first main difference that emerges between the two waves is the reason for migration: more recently the reasons seem to have become more diverse, and not just work-related. Nearly all of the sample mentioned the more personal abstract notion of gaining 'life experience' alongside whatever practical reason they had for migrating (marriage, joining a family member, work or study). For this reason, even the optimists who believed the education situation in Pakistan to be improving quickly still hoped that their children would go to the UK for their higher degrees. The notion of 'life experience' was usually linked to learning how to live in a diverse society and meeting other people from different backgrounds, and making the most of British public space. While the private space of homes was appreciated in Pakistan, the public space in Britain was much admired, especially in terms of the working environment and rule of law. Striking a balance between the desire for a more attractive private and public space was what made the decision of returning back home difficult.

Although urban middle and upper class migrants were likely to go to the UK with a very clear agenda and knew already when they would return to Pakistan, this was not the case for all. What could impinge on the decision to return seemed to be mainly the sense of achievement and the needs of the extended family. When an individual had achieved all that they wanted to in the UK, even a job offer might not be enough for them to stay on once they had thought about putting their British experience to use back home. For individuals from less privileged backgrounds it was more likely that they would stay on until they had made at least some kind of achievement, professional or educational. As well as wanting to show their community back at home that they had made the most from their British opportunities, this was also due to the perception among rural migrants that it took much more capital to start a business in Pakistan than it would to have a job that allowed a good lifestyle in the UK.

Often having a lump sum of capital was not even sufficient guarantee of success for having a business back home, given the intricate politics, corruption, fraud and lack of understanding of the local business culture. This was something that led to depression or frustration and the 'Dubai syndrome' mentioned above (Donnan and Werbner 1991). This was not just linked to difficulties in setting up businesses: there was also a general sense of withdrawal symptoms from certain food and drinks, and the longing for social spaces such as theatres and nightclubs. But having family close by often countered this, and is still very important in the dynamics of migration, if not as crucial as it used to be.

In fact, family did play a major role in decisions to return, but it was always paired with other factors. We encountered many examples of returns triggered by parents' illness or by demands from extended family to look after a business. On a related note was the notion of the life-cycle: many interviewees seemed to think that the UK may not be the best environment in which to bring up their children, and while it was considered conducive to the development of a mature adult, it was commonly feared that old age in Britain would be sad and lonely, perhaps destined for an old people's home. Young adults, however, thought that the multicultural experience of Britain was one of the best 'life experiences' one could ever get.

An important point to make is that this research was conducted at a very difficult time for Pakistan. This enhanced the sense of political and social frustration and although patriotism was quite common among interviewees, criticism for their home country and admiration for British structures and infrastructure played a considerable part in reflections on their own experiences. The solution to the dilemma of the choice between the best public space and the best private space, as it may be put, can be described by Afsar's words:

*'If I had the opportunity to live for small periods of time in different countries I would do, I would like a global lifestyle. But I don't want to retire in an old people's home. I want to die in Pakistan.'* (Afsar, male, 23, corporate banker, Karachi)

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