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Representations of British South Asian Diasporic Identities in Contemporary British Audio-Visual Media

Dissertationsschrift

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Introduction

A huge shift has emerged in world politics since the fall of the iron curtain and the break-up of the Soviet Union. This shift from what used to be an ideologically bi-polar political world to, in Samuel Huntington’s words, a new “world order” that involves a “clash of the civilizations” (1997) calls for a revised understanding of modes of identification. No longer does ideology (whether one is communist or capitalist) play the significant determining role in the definition of the Self and the Other. The globalised world with phenomena like mass migration and multiculturalism poses other difficult questions with regard to the definition of identity. Who are the Self and the Other in our contemporary world? The answer appears to be but too obvious in the wake of the events of the last decade. Increasing fundamentalism and its manifestation in acts of terror, like the bombing of the twin towers in New York in 2001 and the London bombings of 2005, and the resulting wars on terror led by the Western world in Afghanistan and Iraq, have once again set the ‘East’ against the ‘West’, an opposition very familiar from the construction and hierarchisation of identities in the colonial era that spanned centuries of global history. The change lies in the fact that this time the proclaimed category of difference has shifted from ‘race’ (now revised as ethnicity) to religion. In the context of multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious societies, which are an inevitable result of globalisation, this matter becomes of immense significance. It leads to a number of questions: How does one identify the religious Other? What renders religion visible? Are ethnicity and religion mutually exclusive categories, or do they overlap in processes of identification? Is religious profiling another form of racialist practice with skin colour still being the determinant marker of difference? How do all these questions affect identities of those who have been the colonised Other, the racial/ethnic Other, and now the religious Other? And finally, and most significantly, to what extent do we actually live in a multicultural reality where race and ethnicity are not barriers to equality?

It is in the light of these questions that this work attempts to analyse representations of British South Asian identities in contemporary British audio-visual media. The post-World War II migration of South Asians from the subcontinent (and parts of Africa) to Britain for mostly economic reasons resulted in the formation of the British South Asian diaspora¹, the largest non-

¹ ‘British Asian’ is the popular term to refer to British South Asian. However, for the sake of precision, as Britain has many diasporas who are originally from other parts of the Asian continent (for example: China), the term commonly used in this work to refer to the diaspora from the subcontinent of South Asian is British South Asian.
white ethnic minority in Britain\(^2\) (Office for National Statistics: 2005). Historically representing the colonised Other and the racial Other, this group would still be considered the ethnic Other and the religious Other (the majority of British Muslims are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin - The Runnymede Trust, 1997). Looking at audio-visual media representations of identities of this group and understanding these as not just discursively produced, but also contributing to the discourse provides an insight into the contemporary state of socio-political affairs in multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Britain.

The notion of identities as predicated on the difference between the Self and the Other has been integral to the history of Western intellectual tradition. Identity, understood as the meaning of the Self, has always needed the Other to define it. ‘We’ are what ‘they’ are not, and ‘they’ are what ‘we’ are not. This is the fundamental principle on the basis of which identity of the Self, the ‘we’, is defined as different from the identity of the Other or the ‘they’. This process of conceptualising the Self as different from the Other involves a process of exclusion based on attributes and traits, and has often tended to maintain strictly demarcated boundaries between the Self and the Other. It neglects internal differences, essentialising these to give rise to homogenised identities. Edward Said identifies this phenomenon in his discussion of the Orientalist discourse. Regardless of actual geographical location, which is a source of diversification, the Orient came to mean a homogenous entity used in the definition of the Occident (Said, 2001). This understanding of identity is based on a “solitarist approach”, meaning defining the Self and the Other through “singular and overarching system of partitioning” (Sen, 2006: xii).

However, group identities have never been homogenous, each subject or individual belonging to a group being different from the other, argues Robert J.C. Young in the introduction to his book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. There are, in his opinion, situations of “instability and disparity” that lead to the use of the ‘solitarist approach’, yielding homogenised and essentialised identities (1995:4). Cultural contact during the era of colonisation could be considered as an instance which caused such “instability and disparity” leading to the creation of fixed homogenous identities based on binaries.

\(^2\) These statistics are based on the 2001 census in Britain. The results of the 2011 census are yet to be published.
In the current context, cultural contact is inevitable on a day-to-day basis. Marked by phenomena like globalisation and mass migration, societies can hardly claim an exclusive cultural, ethnic or religious origin. Diasporas are a prime example of groups of individuals living in the contact zone between two cultures. How does the diasporic experience influence identity? Situated as they are in neither-here-nor-there, in-between cultures, their identities challenge the solitarist approach and the essentialised binaries that come with it. They force one to recognise that identities are much more complex than a simple opposition of the mutually exclusive categories of the Self against the Other. Characterised by a journey through time and space, diasporic identities are dynamic and in a state of flux rather than stable and fixed. What they emphasize is the significance of the context (time and space) when it comes to defining identities. This emphasis on context is applicable not just to group identities as a whole but to each and every individual in the group. When identity is understood as intrinsically linked to context, different contexts produce differing/plural identities in an individual.

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen illustrates this with a simple but rather amusing example:

A solitarist approach can be a good way of misunderstanding nearly everyone in the world. In our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups – we belong to all of them. The same person can be, without any contradiction, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a school teacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theater lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician, and someone who is deeply committed to the view that there are intelligent beings in outer space with whom it is extremely urgent to talk (preferably in English). Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously belongs, gives her a particular identity. None of them can be taken to be the person’s only identity or singular membership category (2006: xii-xiii).

For the woman in the above example the answer to the question – Who am I? – depends on the context in which she is present, and the facet of her identity that this context demands. For cultural theorist Stuart Hall these contexts demand different subject positions (facets) of identity to be voiced or expressed.

From the deliberations above one could conclude that group identities can never be static, stable, fixed or homogeneous, consisting as they do of different individual identities, each of

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3 Stuart Hall represents a different tradition in academics, i.e. a left/socialist rather than Amartya Sen’s and Kwame Anthony Appiah’s (mentioned further) liberalist approach. Though the final understanding of identities as differentiated and plural are common to both approaches, this study borrows from Hall’s work in the area as it is grounded in postcolonial cultural studies, and focuses on issues of diasporic identity in Britain in particular.
which is multifaceted and contextually determined. Additionally, any such homogeneous group identity is hence a construct produced by the process of essentialising through a singular aspect, and thereby marginalising others.

At this stage, it is significant to reconsider what Robert Young says about situations where this form of essentialisation to produce homogeneous identities occurs, i.e., in times of “instability and disparity” (1995:4). Such situations call for a response in terms of manifestation of power through unification on the basis of some factors and marginalisation of others in order to be overcome. This process can be identified in the colonial discourse, where, as mentioned previously, ‘instability and disparity’ arises from cultural contact. It is, however, not only a mere contact with cultural difference but a clash of interests (economic and political) that contributes to a situation where power needs to be manifested by means of oppression, a point that Kwame Anthony Appiah makes in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). Another clash of interests can also be witnessed in the struggle against racist oppression between coloured Britons⁴ and white Britons, where the umbrella term Black Britons came to represent not just the British Afro-Caribbean and British African diaspora, but also the British South Asian diaspora. In the process of establishing a counter-power to the racist oppression, British South Asian identities have been marginalised (Hall, NE, 1996: 163).

In order to overcome marginalisation of identities and oppression and inequalities that arise from it, it is immensely important to recognise the play of differences and the heterogeneity and the ambivalence that comes with it. It involves questioning the all-encompassing nature of binaries and challenging their fixed and stable nature. That the Self and the Other are not singular homogeneous entities in opposition to each other but are each differentiated, diffuses the axis on which power and oppression operate.

To achieve this end, however, it is important to locate the site of identity construction. This is none other than representation. The question – Who am I? – needs an answer that conveys the essence of the ‘I’ and makes the ‘I’ intelligible. It involves a process of signification, and is therefore a re-presentation. Identities are re-presentations of the I – the thing itself (‘das Ding an sich’) – the subject.

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⁴ The term coloured Britons is used to refer to non-white Britons and does have the same politicised meaning of the term Black Britons, which is embedded in the specific historical context of race relations in Britain.
Representations of identities in narratives form culture, according to Edward Said. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, he defines culture as consisting of two aspects:

First of all [culture] means all those practices, like arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. Included, of course, are both the popular stock of lore about distant parts of the world and specialized knowledge available in such learned disciplines as ethnography, historiography, philology, sociology and literary history. Second, and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860s. Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralize, the ravages of a modern, aggressive, mercantile and brutalising urban experience. You read Dante or Shakespeare in order to keep up with the best that was thought and known, and also to see yourself, your people and your society and tradition in their best lights. In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates ‘us’ from them, almost always with a degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that, as we see in recent ‘returns’ to culture and tradition (1994: xii-xiv).

Said argues that cultural narratives are not just representations of identities; they form points of attachment for further construction of identities. Within the context of colonialism he illustrates his point by analysing examples of great literary works. He looks at works of canonical authors like Charles Dickens and Jane Austen and shows how their narratives on Victorian England have underlying references to colonialism and have helped solidify imperial ideology, thereby contributing heavily to the construction and maintenance of the Coloniser’s identity against that of the Colonised (1994).

Besides the power yielded by narratives to construct identity, it is also a question of power that is the most significant factor in deciding which narratives are more dominant, and therefore more determining, in contrast to others. ‘Who has the power to narrate and hence represent identities?’ is one of the most fundamental questions that is asked or needs to be asked when asymmetrical power relations are analysed and deconstructed – a question that has been asked by postcolonialists who deconstruct colonial narratives representing identities of the Coloniser and the Colonised.

It is with regard to the question of power that narrative representations, which play such a significant role in identity construction, are still relevant in the context of contemporary identities in multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious societies like that in Britain. An analysis of narrative representations of British South Asian identities provides an insight into the
political, social and cultural dynamics of Britain today. Significant questions in the analysis are: What does the representation entail? Is the representation essentialised and reductionist, i.e. following a solitarist approach and projecting homogeneity of identities? And in whose favour do these representations work? Do they emphasize asymmetrical power relations between groups of people or create hierarchies? Or do they deconstruct these with representations of heterogeneous and ambivalent identities? An analysis centred on these questions is critical to evaluate to what extent hierarchies and asymmetrical power relations, with concrete manifestations like discrimination and oppression, have been overcome in contemporary Britain’s multicultural society. Such an analysis becomes significant, especially in the light of the emergence of new categories of Othering like religion, and a likely resurrection of older patterns of identity construction which privilege one group over another, and which can quench any hope of egalitarianism.

It is in this light that this work analyses popular audio-visual media texts as narrative representations of identities. With the exponential expansion and proliferation of television and film in a matter of a little over a century since the birth of the medium, audio-visual media’s inescapable reach into the lives of people of all backgrounds can hardly be challenged. Similar to literature, audio-visual media are also a site for narrative representations. Film texts narrate, just as written texts. They use a different sign system to this end. While the written text depends on the written sign to convey meaning, the film text’s narrative power lies in the projection of moving images, hence depending on a system of visual and aural signs to convey meaning. Their construct character might appear to be less apparent at first glance as they depend on visual and aural systems used by humans to comprehend daily life. Their representative character manifests itself through the act of narration – the script, the camera, misé-en-scene, sound and editing (McFarlane, 1996: 20-27).

Selection of Primary Texts
Taking the arguments mentioned above as a point of departure, the following work analyses contemporary television and film productions from Britain that represent British South Asian identities. In order to make this study as exhaustive as possible the range of texts analysed are taken from various genres. With regard to television, the texts selected encompass all three
primary British terrestrial channels i.e. BBC, Channel 4 and ITV and range from genres of comedy (*The Kumars At No. 42*, BBC, 2001-2006; *Mumbai Calling*, ITV, 2009), family drama (*Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, BBC, 2005) and thriller (*Britz*, Channel 4, 2007) to documentary (*A Sikh’s Journey Home*, BBC, 2008; *The Great British Asian Invasion*, Channel 4, 2004) police procedural (*Life On Mars*, BBC, 2006-2007) and soap opera (*EastEnders*\(^5\), BBC, 2009-2010). Any study of contemporary television would be incomplete without considering reality TV, a genre that has made an indelible mark on the television landscape over the last decade. To this end, the study includes the popular reality game show *The Apprentice* (BBC, 2005). The aspect that all these television texts have in common is that they include British South Asian characters, to varying extents. Whereas the *The Kumars At No.42, A Sikh’s Journey Home, Britz*, and *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, have British South Asian protagonists and aspects of British South Asian identities in their narrative in the first line, the police procedural *Life On Mars* or the very recent legal drama *Silk* (BBC, 2011), have single episodes with British South Asian characters, the main protagonists throughout the series being primarily white Britons. *EastEnders* and *The Apprentice* are different in this respect. The first concentrates on portraying Britain – more specifically London’s East End – as a multicultural community, with characters of diverse ethnic origins, cultural difference and interaction being a theme that is brought up from time to time. *The Apprentice* has also consistently had a multicultural, multiethnic cast throughout its various series; however, cultural or ethnic difference is not thematised, the game show emulating a post-racial ethos.

The selection of feature films however reflects a varying approach, as it concentrates on three key films that represent the British Pakistani Muslim diaspora in Britain, a community that has been the topic of ever-increasing controversy over the last decade. In the contemporary socio-political scenario, with mounting debate on religion, especially Islam, replacing ethnicity and race as the fundamental category of discrimination, the choice to include films representing this issue is but obvious. This thematic starts with the exploration of the last two television texts *Britz* and *EastEnders*, both also focusing on the British Pakistani diaspora and issues of religious identity. The first film, *My Son The Fanatic* (1997), though released before the terrorist attack on

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\(^5\) The soap-opera *EastEnders* is ongoing since 1985 till the present day. This work focuses on the development of the Masood family story arc in the episodes in 2009 and 2010. *The Apprentice* and *Silk*, similarly started in 2005 and 2011 respectively, but analysis presented here is of episodes from the first series. With regard to *Life On Mars*, it is an episode from the second series 2007 which is analysed.
the twin towers, raises issues of fanaticism in affiliations that identities are constructed upon, religion being one of them. The second film, *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), also concentrates on the issue of religious and community and familial affiliation of identities but with a slightly different focus, juxtaposing representatives of the Irish Catholic diaspora in Britain with the Pakistani Muslim diaspora. *Yasmin* (2004) on the other hand takes up directly issues of discrimination on the basis of religion that followed the attacks on the twin towers. The use of a female protagonist brings the aspect of gender into the debate on differentiated identities. The films, though all belong to the genre of realist narratives, have different ways of dealing with religious identities. Furthermore, the analysis is structured to show a progression, *My Son The Fanatic* dealing with intra-familial identity clash, *Ae Fond Kiss* dealing with the relations between two postcolonial ethnic and religious minorities, and *Yasmin* then situating these inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations in the direct context of the events of September 11 2001.

**Structure of the Study**

To analyse the wide range of texts that have been chosen, the following work has been divided into three basic chapters. The first chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological approaches from the fields of postcolonial studies, cultural studies and media studies, applied to the study of the representations of British South Asian diasporic identities in contemporary British audio-visual media. This chapter is further divided into four sections, starting with the aspects that are inherent to any definition of diaspora. Diasporas, being situated between two cultures, blur the strict demarcating lines between traditionally conceived cultural identities. Diasporas do not just represent two or more geographical regions and their cultures but also a dialectic synthesis on a temporal level between the past and the present, a time in their culture of origin and a time in their new abode. Derived from this, the two chief features discussed in the section on diasporic identities are hybridity and the idea of ‘home’ as a ‘route’ rather than ‘roots’ and their implications in aspects like a sense of loss or nostalgia or cultural memory, all of which play important roles in understanding diasporic identities. These aspects also contribute to understanding identities as not contained in mutually exclusive, monadic conceptions of the Self and the Other. Further challenges to the traditional notions of identities are then explored by seeing, on the level of the individual, how identities involve both the autonomy of the subject, as
well as the context that the subject is momentarily located in. The multiple contexts that change from time to time and their dynamic interaction produce identity as a representation, underlining the gap between the subject and the articulation of identity. The chapter then explores multiple conclusions for the debate on identities such as looking at the act of articulation as a performative act, which brings in the possibility of agency on the part of the subject. It also elaborates on another important aspect, that of ambivalence, which features in the identities of any group made up of heterogeneous individuals with heterogeneous subjectivities and heterogeneous contexts that themselves change on the time-space axis.

The second section of the first chapter looks at the aspect of representation, an aspect relevant as discussed earlier for any study on identities. Drawing from linguistics and semiotics, understanding representation as an integral part of daily human communication builds on how representations (signs) have connotative meanings in addition to denotative ones. With this recognition comes the aspect of who decides what a sign represents, or how meaning is fixed in a sign or representation. These questions lead to a discussion of the nature of discourse and the power play that establishes it.

The third section looks at the colonial discourse, a discourse which has established fixed identities for the Self and the Other and sustained these over centuries through representation. Moreover, this discourse and its representational practices have had a direct impact on representations of British South Asian identities even after political decolonisation of the subcontinent. One of the strategies of representation that colonial discourse has employed is that of the stereotype and this is examined in detail. It explores the issue of skin colour becoming the sole signifier for a number of traits used to create binaries between the Self and the Other, and its link to fantasy, desire and fetish, all underlying phenomena in processes of Othering. Additionally it explores means by which representations of the Self and the Other as mutually exclusive entities in a hierarchical relationship may be contested, challenged and subverted.

The fourth and the last section of chapter one relates the points covered to audio-visual media. It emphasises, with the use of the theory of ‘semiohistorie’, how the boundaries between factual or documentary texts and fictional texts are irrelevant when viewing audiovisual media as a site for discursive representations.
With the theoretical and methodological groundwork laid out, the second chapter explores the context of representations of the British South Asian diaspora in contemporary Britain. For this, it looks at three significant discourses which are intertwined and which form the background against which contemporary texts can be analysed. The first section of this chapter starts with exploring the master narrative of British identity, its identifiable connection to the Empire, and nostalgia for the past, a time when Britain ruled the world. It cites manifestations of Empire and the accompanying nostalgia, looking for possible reasons for this in contemporary Britain, which owes a large part of its multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism to its former colonies.

It is against this master narrative of Britishness that South Asians who immigrated to Britain after the independence of the subcontinent and their progeny have had to struggle to find a space for articulation of their diasporic identities – British with a South Asian heritage. The second section of the chapter elaborates upon this struggle, this journey from an immigrant group to a diaspora and further. It takes up matters of legislation in the field of race relations, the struggle against racism and the movement for equal rights for coloured people (amongst them British South Asians), each decade showing new developments in this journey, a ‘route’ critical in determining contemporary British South Asian identities. It also emphasises the continuation of the journey, as it looks at newer forms of ‘xenophobia’, like Islamophobia, its legalised or institutionalised nature as contended by experts to be a blatant violation of human rights (Fekete, 2009), in the light of the fact that the majority of British Muslims are a part of the British South Asian diaspora.

Thirdly, this chapter explores a final aspect of the context in which contemporary audio-visual representations of British South Asians are located, i.e., the historical overview of the way in which South Asians (at the time of Empire) and then British South Asians have been represented in British television and film. Forming the direct background for contemporary representations of British South Asian identities, this section charts the move from being represented and the struggle for self-representation, the decades of politically loaded self-representation and the crossing over to the mainstream.

Against this backdrop, the final chapter of this work contains the analyses of contemporary representations. It is divided into two sections, the first looking at television and the second at film. As noted in the discussion of the choice of primary texts, the section on
television includes comedy, drama, soap opera and documentary. This section takes up features of diasporic identities that are developed in the chapter on theoretical and methodological approach, among them hybridity, the aspect of journey and home, performance or role play, heterogeneity and ambivalence. It however also looks for the perpetuation of processes of Othering similar to the colonial representational practices of reductionism, essentialisation and stereotyping that signify a perpetuation of fixed identities of the Self and the Other and the asymmetrical power relations between them. These features form the categories of analysis and the subchapters in this section, for each of which two texts are analysed. The analysis involves a close reading, integrating aspects of script, mise-en-scène as well as other diegetic and non-diegetic narrative devices like music, setting, narrative voice/authority (if present), perspective, etc. Genre also plays a role with regard to each analysis; for instance, in the case of the soap opera *EastEnders*, genre conventions regarding plot themes are significant.

The section on television texts is followed by a section on the analysis of the feature-length films, which also concentrates on British Pakistani Muslim identities. The criteria of analysis remain the same, reading the texts for features of identities like hybridity, performance, heterogeneity and ambivalence to see if processes of Othering are identifiable in these representations.

The conclusions drawn from these analyses and their evaluation with regard to the contemporary social, political, cultural and religious debates in Britain form the final section of this work.

Placement within Current Research

A study on the representations British South Asian diasporic identities in audio-visual media calls for an interdisciplinary approach, combining aspects of media with understandings of identities and representation. Postcolonial studies and cultural studies become obvious fields of choice as they, more so than any other discipline, analyse the past and the present contexts of the former Colonised, the way hierarchies have been and continue to be created and manifested through representation, and the effect of this on identities both of the (former) Coloniser and the (former) Colonised. British South Asians with their historical experience of colonisation fall into this category. Also with regard to diaspora, especially in the case of newer diasporas, like that of
British South Asians, formed as a result of colonial practices, these fields of study are of great significance. Borrowing from other disciplines like poststructuralist deconstruction, particularly Jacques Derrida's theory of différencé (deferral and difference), and psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), with emphasis on the mirror stage or the imaginary phase of identity construction, postcolonial studies sets out to deconstruct fixed, homogenous and mutually exclusive identities of the Self (Coloniser) and Other (Colonised) based on binary oppositions. Exposing the loopholes in such conceptions, it develops an alternative understanding of identities as hybrid, heterogeneous and ambivalent. Here works of postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha, particularly his collection of essays *The Location of Culture* (1994), are ground breaking, showing how cultural boundaries are diffused and blurry rather than clearly fixed, that identities are hybrid and that the power play between them is ambivalent. In another essay, *Culture’s In-Between* (1996), he exemplifies his concept of hybridity through the example of diaspora.

The example of diaspora is also used by cultural theorists like Avtar Brah (1996) and Stuart Hall (2003, 1997, 1996) who discuss issues of identities, race, ethnicity, culture and their link to representation. Also borrowing from Derrida and Lacan, Hall and Brah talk of heterogeneous identities and criticise the reductionist practice of essentialising identities to make them homogeneous. The dynamic and ‘constantly evolving’ aspects of identities form a central tenet of their understandings. Furthermore, Hall, following in the footsteps of Edward Said (*Orientalism*: 2001 and *Culture and Imperialism*: 1994), who looks at identity construction as a representation and therefore prone to discursive power play (Michel Foucault), also theorises identity as representation in his essay *Who Needs Identity?* (1996), however allowing for the possibility of agency. Representation and its link to discourse are also discussed by Hall in the book titled *Representation* (1997). He explains discursive representational practices used to construct identities, based on binary oppositions like the stereotype. The nature of stereotypes as a form of reductionist Othering is explored by Richard Dyer (1993), and its hidden function as a fetish (Freud) and fantasy and desire (Gilman: 1985, Young: 1995, Mercer: 1994) is theorised by Homi Bhabha (1994) who uses Frantz Fanon’s foray into the psychology of colonialism (*Black Skin, White Masks*: 2008) as an example.

The work of these theorists, though they differ in their individual approach to a postcolonial and cultural discussion on identities ranging from liberal to Marxist, have in
common a differentiated understanding of identity, and challenge representations of these as monadic entities with a hierarchical relationship between them. This understanding forms the fundament of this work, which further applies the idea of ambivalence on an intra-cultural level to deconstruct any hegemonic notions of cultural fixedness and homogeneity.

In order to analyse texts from audio-visual media as representations of identity and understanding their discursive nature, this study relies on Jürgen E. Müller’s (1998) approach, ‘Semiohistorie’. Müller contends that audio-visual media is a rich source for the study of history. Not just documentaries but also other genre of audio-visual media can be understood as representing historical events and their implications. This study extends this argumentation to the representation of identities, as they are produced in and determined by a context – a space and time – and are anything but ahistorical.

With regard to contextualising British South Asian identities, there is a lot of research that this study borrows from. The persisting link between nostalgia for the Empire and Britishness has been explored by cultural theorist Paul Gilroy (2005), amongst others. Dilip Hiro (1991), Zig Layton Henry (1992), John Solomos (1993) and others provide a very detailed account of the history of immigration of the former (coloured) Colonised to Britain, their arrival, experiences, the race-relations debate and legislation through the decades, and the struggle for equality. Though certain events and aspects specific to the South Asian diaspora are included in these accounts, the focus is on the umbrella term ‘Black Britons’ in general. This work sieves these accounts for information relevant to the British South Asian diaspora in particular, obviously impacted in similar ways as other former Colonised and coloured diasporas in Britain, however emphasizing their specific historical and cultural experience. It also adds to the debate on race relations, the emerging category of religion as a basis for discrimination, and relies heavily on the work of Tahir Abbas (2004) and Liz Fekete (2009) for this purpose.

The use of the umbrella term Black British is also common in research on carried out on the representations of coloured ethnic minorities in Britain (British South Asians among them). Sarita Malik (2002), Jim Pines (1992, 2001) and a collection of articles edited by Therese Daniels and Jane Gerson (1989) provide exhaustive analyses on the representation of race and ethnicity in British television in light of ongoing developments in race relations. Malik (1996) also analyses representation of Black Britons in film, emphasising the turn from the politically
charged genre of Black British film to the genre ‘cross-over films’ as Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg also do in their study entitled *Bidding for the Mainstream? Black and British Films since the 1990s* (2004). A recent work which deals with representations of ethnic minorities, amongst them British South Asians, is *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts* (2008), edited by Lars Eckstein, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Christoph Reinfandt. This collection of articles includes analysis of films which might be considered as belonging to the cross-over genre like *Bride And Prejudice* (2004), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Nina’s Heavenly Delights* (2006), based on issues of gender and its link to culture (Ellen Dengel-Janic and Lars Eckstein). It also features essays on the diasporic experience of British South Asians in recent films, including an analysis by Claudia Sternberg of the representation of British Pakistani Muslims in *Yasmin* (2004).

Although this study draws upon the above-mentioned works, it differs from them in its singular focus on the British South Asian diaspora, and the representation of their identities, viewing audio-visual media – both film and television – as sites of representation. Furthermore, the analysis of television includes texts from various genres, including documentary and reality TV, in addition to drama. Uniquely it does not focus solely/exclusively on texts made by British South Asians (self-representations) or where British South Asians and their identities remain the singular focus, but looks at recent popular series like *Life On Mars* and *Silk* where the chief protagonists are white British. It analyses these texts, understanding the practice of representation as key to identities and to their relations to one another. Employing a postcolonial, cultural studies approach, it looks at various features of diasporic identities like hybridity, dynamicity, performativity, heterogeneity and ambivalence and their successful or not so successful representation (where processes of Othering like stereotyping might still be found). With the singular focus in the film section on identities of British Pakistani Muslims, it explores the link between representation of religion with debates on Islamic fundamentalism and Islamophobia in the contemporary social political and cultural environment in Britain.
1. Diasporic Identities and their Representation

The simple sounding question – Who am I? – or – What is my identity? – has been the topic of much debate over centuries. Both philosophy and later psychoanalysis have dealt with the subject comprehensively (Hall, 1996:1). This chapter raises this fundamental question again in the context of diasporas like the British South Asian diaspora, and forms the framework against which the chosen audio-visual texts are analysed.

The chapter starts with explaining the unique position of the diaspora as not just spatially between geographical locations, but also temporally between two times, and the factors arising from this uniqueness that characterise diasporic identities. It is this feature of diasporas that challenges traditional notions of organically derived identity. The first section of the following chapter borrows from fields of postcolonial and cultural studies to arrive at a differentiated and performative understanding of identities as heterogeneous and ambivalent.

Furthermore, if identity is understood as a process of making meaning of the Self, the process of identity construction occurs essentially in the field of representation. The second part of the chapter focuses on the aspect of representation, how any production of meaning is a representational process and how representations are discursively controlled.

For the British South Asian diaspora, a major determining factor is the experience of colonialism. Additionally, colonialism also forms the historical context for the relationship between white Britons and South Asians. Understanding the operations of colonial discourse and its representations of identities as binaries of the Self and the Other with race as a primary signifier is critical in analysing contemporary representations, and assessing the move from the fixed notions of identity to a more ambivalent and heterogeneous notion, as postcolonial understandings show. The power play of the colonial discourse, and the representational practices used by it form the third section of the chapter.

The final section of the chapter focuses on audio-visual media as a discursive site for representations of identities. It elaborates the analytical method of ‘Semio-historie’ which looks at audio-visual media as a rich source for historical ‘truths’ or ‘facts’. Such ‘truths’ and ‘facts’ about identities of the Self and the Other have been a driving force in discourses of domination such as the colonial discourse. To answer the question – if and how these ‘truths’ have changed, in accordance with contemporary understanding of identities in a multi-cultural multi-ethnic
context? – requires viewing audio-visual media as a relevant site for representation and construction of identities.

1.1. Diasporas
The word diaspora comprises two Greek words ‘dia’ meaning through and ‘speirein’ meaning to scatter (Brah, 1996: 181). The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “the dispersion” applying it to the scattering of Jewish people around the world, exiled from their homeland already in Babylonian times, an exile that continued through the Roman rule of Jerusalem till the mid-20th century, when the state of Israel was formed. As Avtar Brah notes, “the word embodies a notion of a centre, a locus, a ‘home’ from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes images of multiple journeys” (1996:181). Different from the terms ‘migration’ or ‘travel’, the idea of ‘home’ is central to the concept of diaspora. It is not just the point from where the scattering takes place, but becomes a notion which lives through a continual link between the diasporic population and this point of scattering. Secondly, it comes to denote a new place of abode, a new ‘home’ by the act of “settling down [or] putting roots ‘elsewhere’” (Brah, 1996: 182).

In the words of Ascroft, Griffiths and Tiffin:

A fundamental ambivalence is embedded in the term diaspora: a dual ontology in which the diasporic subject is seen to look in two directions – towards a historical cultural identity on one hand, and the society of relocation on the other. In a diasporic subject, then, we see in stark relief the hybrid and the dual characteristics that are most often associated with post-colonial discourse (2006: 424; italics in original).

It is this juxtaposition of two notions of ‘home’ and its relation to identity inherent to the concept of Jewish Diaspora that is emphasized. when it is applied to other communities. Among them are those who were forced to move or willingly moved from their country of origin from the late 19th century onwards as an impact of colonialism and imperialism. The slavery associated with imperialism caused Africans to be uprooted from their homeland and transported across the globe to the Americas. The subcontinent of South Asia and China were similarly affected, where slavery was replaced by the practice of indentured labour, also a product of imperialism. People from South Asia and China were moved to work in different locations of the Empire, primarily South Africa and the Caribbean, forming diasporas.

Conversely, one does not hear of an English or a British diaspora, in spite of the fact that a large number of Britons did migrate and settle in Australia, New Zealand or Northern America,
also contributing to major changes in the demographic pattern of the world in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the experience of this movement was different due to their relatively powerful position as colonisers. In addition, they did not form minority cultures in the new lands they populated; they were the majority culture exercising their social, political and economic power over the indigenous population. In contrast, while the number of Africans in the Caribbean might have been significant enough to be considered a majority, however, socially they were weaker (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2006: 426).

The movement of South Asians to Britain, primarily after the independence of India and Pakistan from the British Empire, also constitutes the formation of a diaspora. Principally due to economic reasons, large numbers of people moved from their countries of origin to the former centre of the Empire. Their status in their new home is that of minority communities which have settled in Britain but retained a strong link to their countries of origin.

1.1.1. Diaspora and the Nation

The fact that diasporic communities have an ambivalent relation towards the concept of ‘home’, a relationship that is fluid rather than static and fixed, makes their presence question the idea of nation and an identity associated with it. But, as Benedict Anderson informs us, nations are but “imagined communities” (1991). He suggests the following definition: “[nation] is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991: 6). He elaborates this definition, saying that each member of a nation does not personally know the other, qualifying the use of the adjective ‘imagined’. Furthermore, a nation, however flexible, has boundaries demarcated by the existence of other nations. The idea of their sovereignty comes from the displacement of dynastical by democratic communal rule and is based on the European ideals of Enlightenment. Its communal quality is based on “comradeship” which transgresses internal differences actually present between the people (Anderson, 1991: 7). This process of essentialising and homogenising internal diversity enables the creation of strong sense of national identity.

The ‘imagined’ character of nation is further emphasized when it is linked to the act of narration. Like other identities, national identity is also related to narratives. Timothy Brennan traces and connects the rise of the nation-state with the Romantic Movement in literature that
celebrates aspects of folklore and language. He suggests that literary fiction, most of all the novel, has played a big role in creating the idea of a nation (1990: 49).

In spite of these arguments that unveil the mythical stature of a nation and the imagined and fictive quality that the concepts of nation, nationalism and national identity imply, it is hard to deny that these constructs have held centre stage in world history. They have not only been the root cause of many wars and the deaths of millions (Anderson, 1991: 1, 2, 7), but have also been the beacon of many movements of independence, sparking off the era of decolonisation (Chatterjee, 1986: 9).

It is this construct of nation and, associated with it, the idea of a homogeneous national identity, that is challenged by diasporas. As mentioned earlier, it is the idea of movement from one home to another new home, uprooting and “putting roots ‘elsewhere’” (Brah, 1996: 182) that is inherent to diaspora. James Clifford explains how the characteristic of the continued connection to the ancestral homeland, the quality that distinguishes diaspora from an immigrant community, cannot be accommodated by the concept of a homogeneous nation-state.

The nation-state, as a common territory and time, is traversed and, to varying degrees, subverted by diasporic attachments. Diasporic populations do not come from elsewhere in the same way that “immigrants” do. In assimilationist nationalist ideologies [...] immigrants may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place. Such ideologies are designed to integrate immigrants, not people in the diasporas. Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations [USA], it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere. People whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be “cured” by merging into a new national community (1997: 250).

The connection of this group of people, this community, with two or more locations, two or more nations simultaneously, does not allow the possibility of a single, fixed sense of belonging, as is implicated in national identity. It transcends the clearly demarcated boundaries that are important to nations and national identities, as diasporic individuals “maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference” (Clifford, 1997: 251).

The cutting across national boundaries, the dispersion, the spreading out, the diffusion through space and the occupation of many different national groups disrupts the process, so important to nationalism, of establishing metaphysical links with a particular geographic location with a particular community that lives within these borders (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2006: 426).
Diasporas serve as prime examples of being “in-between” (Bhabha: 1996: 53) borders and refute the idea of absolute homogeneity within these borders.

### 1.1.2. Locating Diasporas in the ‘In-Between’– The Concept of Hybridity

Hybridity, a term that originally comes from the field of botany, refers to the mixing of two species. The concept was already applied to humans in the 19th century with regard to mixing of human races. Whether different races were different species or different varieties of the same species, the question of their mixing and the consequent capability of future generations to sustain fertility were topics that scientists of the colonial era sought to explain in order to justify the superiority of the European race and the colonial enterprise they undertook (Young, 1995: 1-19).

The large-scale movement of people around the world in colonial times and post-decolonisation made the mixing of cultures of these people inevitable. The formation of diasporas and their relation to different geographical and cultural locations has been elaborated by the use of the term hybridity with regard to mixing of cultures. While the concept of racial hybridity was deployed to demarcate (assumed) absolute differences between races in order to prevent any mixing, the concept of cultural hybridity questions the absolute nature of these differences (Young, 1995: 1-19). In contrast to the Arnoldian perspective on culture, which emphasizes culture's absolute, “uncontaminated” (Bhabha, 1996: 53) nature, cultural hybridity reflects on how cultures interact with each other. Postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha uses T.S. Eliot’s thoughts on culture in the wake of colonial migration and its impact on culture as a point of departure. Though Eliot is concerned with cultures of mainly white settler colonies, Bhabha finds his insight applicable to any form of interaction between two cultures, for instance, the cultures of Coloniser and Colonised. In his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* Eliot says:

> The migrations of modern times ... have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. There has therefore been something in the removements analogous in nature to religious schism. The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture ... The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar forms of culture-sympathy and culture clash appear (as quoted in Bhabha, 1996: 54).
Borrowing from Eliot’s idea, Bhabha explains that cultures do not exist in isolation from one another, and the contact between them is not just an exchange but a much more dynamic process of mixing, which gives rise to something new. This something new is not an end product, but develops further; cultural interaction is a continual process, always in a state of flux. It prevents the conceptualisation of culture as static and fixed. He uses the term “part culture” to elaborate the “connective tissue between cultures” (Bhabha, 1996: 54). It is this “connective tissue” that forms the dynamic border, the threshold, where culture is always in a state of flux. Undermining the essence of the nation and national culture as an uncontaminated, self-contained entity, the process of hybridisation entails an “overdetermination of communal and group differences and an articulation of baffling alikeness and banal divergence” (Bhabha, 1996: 54). Hybridisation produces moments which serve to undermine absolute identifications with either the Self or the Other, and subvert all structures of authority derived from such binaries of self-contained cultures, most significantly colonial hierarchy.

In another work, The Location of Culture, Bhabha describes cultural hybridisation again. This time he uses the example of African American artist Renée Green’s metaphoric description of her exhibition Sites of Genealogy to visualise the process of cultural hybridisation.

Renée Green:

I used architecture literally as a reference, using the attic, the boiler room, and the stairwell to make associations between certain binary divisions such as higher and lower and heaven and hell. The stairwell became a **liminal space**, a pathway between the upper and lower areas, each of which was annotated with plaques referring to blackness and whiteness” (as quoted in Bhabha, I, 1994: 5; my emphasis).

Bhabha understands “the stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity” (1994: 5), or as the space between constructs of self-contained cultures from which these identities originate.

[It] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, I, 1994: 5).

The idea of hybrid cultures opens up a plethora of opportunities to explain the position of diasporic communities. The characteristic of diasporas, belonging to two cultures at the same
time due to displacement from one culture to another, makes them prime examples of cultural hybridisation. They derive at the same time from two or more cultures and their journey reflects not just the transnational movement but also the fact of movement across time, reflected in memory of their ancestral cultural home, their experience of the journey and their lives in the present abode.

1.1.3. Loss, Memory and Home
As the previous section mentions, the connection to an ancestral homeland is an inherent characteristic of diaspora. Edward Said reflects on the sense of loss that plagues members of a diaspora who have been uprooted from their ancestral homeland. His choice of word ‘exile’ in the context of modern diasporas epitomises this sense of loss.

Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between self and its true home. The essential sadness of the break can never be surmounted. It is true that there are stories portraying exile as a condition that produces heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in a person’s life. But these are no more than stories, efforts to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of any exile are permanently undermined by his or her sense of loss (1984: 49).

The insurmountable sense of loss, however, as Said also notes, is “transformed into a potent even enriching motif of modern culture” (1984: 49) and the diasporic space, the ‘liminal space’ between cultures occupied by the displaced individual, becomes a space of creativity. Though Said considers this as “belittl[ing]” (1984: 50) the pain and the trauma suffered by the diasporic individual because of the loss of his ancestral home, others see it in a different light.

Salman Rushdie looks at the idea of cultural displacement from the perspective of an author involved in the creative process. He talks of the problems involved in idolising the refuge and security offered by the notion of an ancestral home, in his case India.

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the minds (1992: 10).

There might be a sense of loss for the ancestral that burdens a diasporic individual that might cause him to look back, according to Rushdie, but the awareness that this memory of this
homeland is partial and fragmented is of acute importance. He uses the metaphor of a “broken mirror” (1992: 11), elaborating what he means by imaginary homelands. It is the incompleteness of the memories, their fragmented nature, that raise their emotional significance for him and urge him to complete the fragments by imagining around them. With reference to his epic novel Midnight’s Children (1981) he says,

I knew I had tapped a rich seam; but the point I want to make is that of course I’m not gifted with total recall, it is precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities (1992: 11-12).

Though Rushdie’s perspective is quite clearly that of an author, his opinion on the relationship the ancestral homeland has with the diasporic individual could be held true for all members of the diaspora. The partiality of memory, and its higher emotional status precisely because of this partial nature that for him offer creative inspiration, might function differently for others far removed from their ancestral home and culture. Vijay Mishra explains this idea using the theory Renata Sacecl explored in her work, The Spoils of Freedom.

Sacecl refers after Lacan, to fantasy as something that is predicated upon construction of desire around a particularly traumatic event. The fantasy of homeland is then linked, in the case of the diaspora, to a recollected moment when diasporic subjects feel they are wrenched from their mother(father)land. This may be the traumatized ‘middle passage’ of slave trade or the sailing ships (later steamships) of Indian indenture, but what the ‘real’ nature of disruption is not at issue here; what is clear is that the moment of ‘rupture’ is transformed into a trauma around an absence that because it cannot be fully symbolized becomes a part of the fantasy itself (1996: 423).

In juxtaposition with the fantastic memories of the past, the members of a diaspora are confronted with the present, in both its physical and temporal manifestations, a reality of their new abode, their new home. Brah talks of the changing meaning of home when it comes to diaspora.

Where is home? On the one hand, ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day [...] all this as mediated by historically specific everyday social relations (1996: 192).
She explains how other categories like social class, for instance, would make the definition of home even more variable. However, in a more general sense she talks of the home being related to a sense of “belonging” (1996: 192). “When does a location become home? What is the difference between ‘feeling at home’ and staking claim to a place as one’s own?” (1996: 193). Again, for her, it is the individual’s personal condition that is the deciding factor. She gives the example of two Black British women of Jamaican origin who define ‘home’ differently. For one, London qualifies as ‘home’ as she lives there. For the other, ‘home’ is Kingston, as she feels that contemporary Britishness does not include Blackness (Brah, 1996:193). The category, diasporic generation, also plays a significant role in the definition of home.

Clearly the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by the memories of what was recently left behind and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities (Brah, 1996: 194).

As a writer, the culture of his new abode is represented first and foremost in its language for Salman Rushdie. He has no “option of rejecting English” (1992: 17) as this is the language of his consciousness. Even his construction of his ‘imaginary homeland’ is in English. He uses the concept of “translation” to describe this process. “The word ‘translation’ comes etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across’. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men” (Rushdie, 1992: 17). The meaning of ‘home’ for him lies in the process, the translation. Rushdie’s being ‘borne across’ is not dissimilar to the concept of ‘routes’ rather than ‘roots’ that James Clifford’s title for his book Routes (1997), which also deals with diasporas, emphasizes. This fluid notion of home signals the “multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries”. It, however, does not inhibit the fact that “[diasporic] groups do not feel anchored in the place of settlement” (Brah, 1996: 194). In contrast to the premise that ‘home’ is congruent with ‘roots’, reflected in Norman Tebbit’s ‘cricket test’ (designed to check the allegiance that British South Asians might feel towards their new abode in the event of a cricket match between England and a South Asian country) (Brah, 1996: 194-195), the idea of ‘routes’ or ‘translation’ as home allows for plurality and heterogeneity because of the emphasis on the multiple places and journeys. It includes the conceptualisation of what Salman Rushdie calls the “ambiguous and shifting ground” (1992: 15) or Homi Bhabha’s “liminal space” (I, 1994: 5), referring to the diasporic space where cultural hybridity is the norm.
I am speaking now of all of us who emigrated [...] and I suspect that there are times when the move seems wrong to us all, when we seem, to ourselves, post-lapsarian men and women. We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork. And as a result – as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates – we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools (Rushdie, 1992: 15).

1.1.4. Identities: Between Autonomy and Context

In order to understand the specifics of diasporic identities, it is important first to probe what has been and what is understood as identity, how is it constructed, and most importantly what, if any, roles individuals play in order to determine them, or is context the most significant factor when defining the Self. These questions are dealt with in an understanding of identities from the field of cultural studies which combines insights from fields like psychoanalysis, discourse analysis and poststructuralism.

Identity or definition of the subject and its subjectivity has been an age old problematic, dealt with by philosophers and theoreticians. The noted philosopher of the age of Enlightenment, Descartes, declares: “I think therefore I am” (as quoted in: Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 220). The statement emphasizes the autonomy of the individual and his/her freedom from any kind of context in construction of his/her subject in the definition of his/her ‘I’. This “Cartesian individualism” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 220) signals the break from the infinite power of the divine over the human, one of the most significant premises of Enlightenment. Centred on this line of thought is also the debate on subject-object distinction that occupies much of philosophy (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 220).

Only much later does a significant change take place in the conceptualisation of the Self, with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. While Freud reveals the unconscious as a factor determining the subjectivity of an individual, Marx looks at the context – the economic structures that govern capitalist society. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (as quoted in: Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 220). The power of defining the Self is taken away from the individual and placed entirely in the hands of the capitalist context (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 220).

Marx’s claim is further developed by Louis Althusser who notes that individuals from the moment of their birth are surrounded by ideologies. He defines ideology as “a representation of
the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence⁶ (1984: 36). These ideologies are reflected through the individual’s parents and relatives, his/her school, or other institutions which largely make up the context in which identity is constructed. The familiarity that these ideologies offer leads to an individual’s identification with them. Althusser’s “interpellation” describes the actual process by which identities are formed. “All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (1984: 47). Making a distinction between individuals and subjects, he gives an example to explain how identity (subject) is constructed.

I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing. ‘Hey, you there!’

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion he becomes a subject (1984: 48).

It is the process of recognition on the hailing by ISAs (Ideological State Apparatus) that Althusser stresses is most significant in the formation of identity. This aspect of recognition marginally acknowledges the autonomy of an individual in spite of the immense power that ideologies have in the construction of identity.

Recognition is also central to the construction of identity in Jacques Lacan’s theory of psychoanalysis. Recognising the Self (the fragmented experience of the infant subject) as different from the Other (the Image or “Imago” the “Ideal I” – a complete/composite Self), i.e. the reflection in the mirror, is the first stage of identity formation – the mirror stage/the imaginary order. The process of recognition constructed across a lack derived from a desire of the fragmented Self for the composite Other, is what Lacan calls “misrecognition” (2006: 80). Following the mirror stage, the individual’s entry into language (which coincides with its recognition of its gender) marks the symbolic order. Language is pre-given according to Lacan, and ruled by laws and conventions available to individuals to articulate their identity with. Identity of the subject, though beginning to form already in the mirror phase, reaches its completion in the symbolic phase by means of articulation within the norms of language. Language, however, is inadequate, as the signifiers never completely capture the signifieds’

⁶ Althusser notes that ideologies do not confirm the real; they are constructs that allude to the real. They are constructs upheld by institutions like school, police, legal systems – the “Ideological State Apparatus” – and do not correspond to real conditions of existence (1984, 36-39).
totality. Similar to the lack in the mirror phase (between the fragmented Self and the composite Image), the pre-given language constructs meaning across a lack. Articulation therefore follows the principle, initiated in the mirror phase, of recognising difference between the Self and the Other. Identity is always therefore constructed in relation to the Other, and due to the development of the individual, it is an ongoing process (Lacan, 2006: 75-81).

For Michel Foucault it is the discourse that takes on the role of the pre-existing context that determines identity. Discourses are systems of knowledge produced by institutions that exert power and determine what is allowed as opposed to not allowed, true as opposed to false. More so than language or ideology, ‘discourse’, because it talks of knowledge and ‘truths’, is invested with much more power (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 224). Identities, according to Foucault, are produced within these all encompassing systems of knowledge and by them. In his essay, What Is an Author? he argues how the figure of an author as a creator of meaning in the form of a text is but a product of the discourse with an organisational function.

[T]he author is not an indefinite source of significations that fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and the recomposition of fiction (Foucault, 2000: 221).

The author is denied originality in his creative power, because all the language and knowledge he operates within is discursively pre-determined. Similarly, the subject is denied of any autonomy and is considered essentially a “variable and complex function of discourse” (Foucault, 2000: 221).

For the poststructuralist, deconstructionist scholar, Jacques Derrida, it is the constant process of deferral and difference (“differérence”) in texts that makes the production of meaning a continuum. The first ‘deferral’ implies that words as signifiers can never fully represent their signified, inducing a gap that requires other words to fill it. But these words in turn create further gaps making the production of meaning an endless process with no fixed end.

The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, ‘thing’ here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the presence in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being present, when the present cannot be represented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence [T]he circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter
the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence (Derrida, 1982: 9).

Difference refers to the binaries on which language is based, as Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure argues. If identity construction is considered the production of meaning of an individual, then Derrida’s concept of “differénce” emphasizes the aspects of dynamicity, non-fixedness and ambiguity of identity, by unveiling its limitless non-precise nature. It, however, also shows the pitfalls of binaries (embedded in words), which are assumed to be fixed in traditional processes of identity construction (processes of Othering), as, due to the process of deferral, gaps always exist, and meanings are prone to be incomplete (Brah, 1996: 245).

Combining poststructuralist, discursive, ideological approaches to identity, Stuart Hall’s definition of identity recognises the autonomy of the individual as well as the impact of the discourse which surrounds the individual.

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practises which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as subjects of social discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to subject positions that discursive practices construct for us (WNI, 1996: 5-6; italics in original).

Living in society, with contexts determined by discourse, ideologies and languages, individuals are called forth in Althusser’s way to take up/respond to subject positions. But Hall emphasizes the incomplete, non-fixed nature of the subject position (following Derrida’s notion of différences) and the need for active articulation on the part of the individual to “effective[ly] suture” (Hall, WNI, 1996: 6) in the knowledge that a gap exists between his individual subjectivity and the given subject position.

The process entails an “overdetermined closure” which tries to overcome/bridge over what it “lacks” (Hall, WNI, 1996: 5). Homi Bhabha also describes this process in his essay, Interrogating Identity. “Finally the question of identification is never an affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is always a production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (1994: 64).

The “transformation” that Bhabha talks of is similar to the process of “suturing” that Hall talks of. These moments of suturing or transformation, in the knowledge of the incongruencies that are bridged over, reveal the partial autonomy of the individual in identity construction.
Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always ‘knowing’ (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes invested in them (Hall, WNI, 1996: 6).

Hall locates the process of identity construction firmly in the field of re-presentation, the gap or the incongruency ensuring the divergence from reality.

1.1.5. Identity as Performance

In her extensive work on feminist thoughts and practices, Judith Butler talks of performative acts that constitute gender identity.

[Gender] identity [is] tenuously constituted over time – an identity instituted through stylized repetitions of acts. Further, it is constituted through the stylization of the body, and hence must be understood in the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (2006: 61).

For her, discourses over time have created prescriptive gender roles that are re-enacted over and again to “produce identity along the culturally intelligible grids of an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1999: 176). So in Hall’s understanding, if an individual were to be hailed by the gender discourse, certain prescriptive normative roles or enactments (subject positions) would be pre-given by the means of which individual’s gender identity would have to be articulated. This could also be extrapolated to other discourses individuals might be hailed by, discourses of ethnicity, age, culture, social class etc. For instance, with regard to age: the popular reprimand ‘act your age’ refers to the normative enactment that the pre-given age role entails.

At first glance, it may seem that the autonomy of the subject is completely lost in the pre-given, prescriptive roles that discourses construct for individuals and hail them into. But Hall lays emphasis on “articulation” of subjectivity by the individual in response to the hail that leads to suturing or identity construction.

The notion [of] an effective suturing of a subject to a subject position requires, not only that the subject be ‘hailed’ but that the subject invests in the position, means that suturing has to be thought of as an articulation, rather than a one sided process (WNI, 1996: 6; italics in original; bold my emphasis).
The use of the word ‘invest’ in Hall’s argument underlines the autonomy of the subject and leads to the possibility of agency. It reflects the fact, as noted earlier, that the subject actively has to ‘invest’ or do something to bridge the gap or close the incongruency that lies between reality or ‘actual subjectivity’ and its representation – ‘identity’. By investment Hall means “arbitrary closure” or putting an end to the endless process of ‘deferral’ (Derrida’s concept) that produces the incongruence. This understanding of investment on the part of the subject as putting an end to an “endless: the infinite semiosis of meaning” is a reflection of autonomy (Hall, MS, 1996: 117). The moment of closure is produced through articulation. Maybe the terms of, and for, articulation (the roles) are pre-given and totally controlled by the discourse, but the actual articulation (performance) is an autonomous act.

Furthermore, if one sees the individual’s process of articulation or performance as imitating a certain discursively pre-given role in lieu of bridging over the gap, then it opens up possibilities of understanding the individual’s autonomy as having agency beyond the all-encompassing power of the discourse that sets norms and hegemonies.

Butler underlines the immense subversive potential that performance could entail. She exemplifies this through drag that does not fit into any pre-given gender roles based on a normative heterosexual premise.

The notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities. Within feminist theory, such parodic identities have been understood to be either degrading to women, in the case of drag and cross-dressing, or an uncritical appropriation of sex-role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality, especially in the case of butch/femme lesbian identities. But the relation between the “imitation” and the “original” is, I think, more complicated than that critique generally allows. [...] The performance of the drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer [sex/subjectivity] and the gender [role] that is being performed. [...] As much as a drag creates a unified picture of a “woman” (what its critics often oppose), it reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency (1999: 175; italics in original).

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7 The idea of imitation is one that Homi Bhabha also makes a point of in his essay Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of the Colonial Discourse (1994: 121-131). Working on a similar principle mimicry produces ambivalence, and exposes the fault lines of the colonial discourse. Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence has been looked at in detail in a further section entitled ‘Intra-Cultural Ambivalence’.
Applying Butler’s understanding of imitation to discourses other than gender which hail the subject, it could be said that autonomous imitation or performance of a certain normative pre-given role, knowing that it differs from ‘actual’ subjectivity, is an act of agency. The recognition of the fact that roles or the subject positions are imitable allows space for play and parody. It questions the claim of discursive subject positions, positions that individuals are hailed to occupy, as being ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’, and deconstructs their hegemonic and normative status. Identity, if understood as performance, includes the possibility of subversion of discursive power and authority. Frantz Fanon uses the colonial discourse to exemplify this idea of agency. For him, it is the recognition of colonialism as a discourse that tries to produce fixed stable identities that provides for agency. Recognising that the colonised subject is a role that calls for performance offers the possibility of contestation. In his book *Black Skin White Masks* he concludes his exploration of the psychology of colonialism, reflecting on agency of the colonised subject. In spite of the immense nature of the oppression of the colonial discourse that has seeped so deep into the psyche of the Black man so that he develops an inherent “inferiority complex” (Fanon, 2008: 3), contestation is possible.

There should be no attempt to fixate man, since it is his destiny to be unleashed.
The destiny of History determines none of my acts.
I am my own foundation.
And it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that I initiate my cycle of freedom (Fanon, 2008: 205).

1.1.6. From Individual to Group: Heterogeneous Diasporic Identities

Stuart Hall’s definition of identity, citied previously, stresses the aspect of difference in the process of identity construction. It recognises not only the existence of multiple subject positions that discourses “hail” individuals to occupy, but also the gap between the subjectivity of the individual and the subject position which needs closure to effectively produce identities. Amartya Sen explains these multiple subject positions as various categories that serve to define the meaning of the Self, gender, sexuality, age, social class, religion and cultural memory among them (2006: 5-6). With these and many other categories, which help individuals define the Self and thereby play a role in the articulation of identities of an individual, any conception of a group of individuals (a collective) consists of varying individual identities. To offer a very simplified example, a British South Asian male has a different identity from a British South Asian female,
or a British South Asian teenager has a different identity from his/her parents, or a British South Asian Muslim is different from a British South Asian Hindu or Sikh. Hence there are diverse identities in the group of individuals called British South Asians. Salman Rushdie gives a more specific example of the heterogeneous identities of a very specific group of people – writers of Indian origin in Britain.

This word ‘Indian’ is getting to be a pretty scattered concept. Indian writers in England include political exiles, first generation migrants, affluent expatriates whose residence here is frequently temporary, naturalized Britons and people born here who may have never laid eyes on the subcontinent (1992: 17).

Stuart Hall exposes essentialised constructions of group identities. In his essay, *New Ethnicities*, he explains with regard to Black Britons, a term that has been used to designate British Afro-Caribbeans, British Africans and British South Asians:8

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’; that is, the recognition that ‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects (NE, 1996: 166; italics in original).

Diasporas, because of their cultural hybridity, their position as “Culture’s-In Between” (Bhabha, 1996: 53) could be considered as examples *par excellence* of such varied and diverse identities. For Homi Bhabha, “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (1990: 211; my emphasis). The range of diversity in subject positions that the third space enables because of cultural hybridity questions essentialised notions of group identities. Avatar Brah notes:

[Diasporic journeys] are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities, for example of gender, ‘race’, class, religion, language and generation. As such all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common ‘we’ (1996: 184).

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8 According to Brah this kind of essentialism is strategic in nature. “In their need to create new political identities, dominated groups will often appeal to bonds of common cultural experience in order to mobilize their constituency […] This will remain problematic if a challenge to one form of oppression leads to the reinforcement of another” (1996: 127).
It is here that the question arises - how do these differing individual identities relate to one another in a group, “in the construction of a common ‘we’” (Brah, 1996: 184). Why are some identities (for example women vs. men in a specific cultural group) marginalised, others more powerful?

1.1.7. Intra-Cultural Ambivalence
As discussed in the previous section, diasporic identities are diverse and heterogeneous. Not only does each diasporic individual have multiple subject positions that make his identity multifaceted, but the differing subject positions of various diasporic individuals in a group make the conception of diasporic identities as a singular entity impossible. For instance, Individual A, a British South Asian, defines his identity in terms of his religion – Hindu, his class or profession – factory worker, his gender – male, his age – 60 yrs, his cultural memory – first-hand experience of the partition of India and Pakistan, followed by immigration to Britain, and the experience of racism, his sexuality – heterosexual, and his ethnicity – South Asian. In contrast Individual B, also British South Asian, defines her identity in terms of her gender – female, age – 20 yrs, profession – medical student, affluent family background, ethnicity – South Asian, cultural memory – family narratives of immigration but no first-hand experience and sexuality – homosexual. When compared, Individual A and Individual B share many similarities. Yet in other aspects that determine their respective identities, they have stark differences. In fact, religion plays a role in the Individual A’s self definition, whereas it does not have any impact on Individual B’s. Certainly, depending on the discourse they are located in, their identities emphasize one subject position rather than another. There are however some overlaps in the example above, namely ethnicity. When ‘called forth’ by discourses on ethnicity, both regard themselves as South Asians. This highly simplified example illustrates how there could be overlaps that might lead to affiliations amongst members of a diasporic group; however it also highlights the differences that would invariably be present. Such overlap can occur to varying degrees, leading to stronger or weaker affiliations. Differences, however, will always exist. The play between similarity from overlaps and differences is a constant feature with regard to groups made up of heterogeneous members, like a diasporic group. The differences might even prove to
be extremes, making diasporic identities ambivalent. Ambivalence does not allow a unified, singular conception of meaning. Diasporic identities are indeed ambivalent through the presence of similarities and differences. Recognition and representation of this ambivalence generated through the multifaceted nature and heterogeneity of diasporic identities has immense implications for essentialising authorities and therefore their unifying agenda.

Homi Bhabha uses the complex relationship between the Colonised and the Coloniser within the power play of the colonial discourse to explain how ambivalence works in undermining colonial authority. In his essay, *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of the Colonial Discourse*, Bhabha describes the term mimicry as the “desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (1994: 122). According to Bhabha, the Coloniser needs the Colonised to be similar to himself but still different. The greater the similarity between them, the more recognisably profound the difference is. Following a post-Enlightenment Western European project of humanism, the Colonised is human enough to be the native that needs to be taught and can be taught Western ways of life. But the process of learning can never render it the same or equal to the Coloniser. A concrete example of this can be seen in *Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education*, where he talks of cultivating “a class of [...] Indians in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay, 2003). Macaulay’s statement illustrates the desire of the reformed Indians who might speak English and think English or even feel English, but look different due to their ‘race’ (Macaulay, 2003). This class of Indian, educated in English, that was meant to be the link between the British rulers and the Indian masses, was similar to the British rulers, but not similar enough to be equal. They are “Anglicized” but not “English” (Bhabha, MM, 1994: 128). It is through the strategy of mimicry that the ambivalence of the colonial discourse is exposed, according to Homi Bhabha.

The discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that itself a process of disavowal (MM, 1994: 122).

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9 The Oxford English Dictionary defines ambivalence as: “The coexistence in one person of contradictory emotions or attitudes (as love and hatred) towards a person or a thing”.
Bhabha’s term ‘slippage’ describes the moment of difference that does not allow the Colonised to be exactly the same as the Coloniser. The exercise of colonial power and authority rests on recreating “partial” (MM, 1994: 123) colonised subjects through a juxtaposition of contrary stances that negate each other. According to Bhabha, it is this slippage that is a moment that could produce “mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double” (MM, 1994: 123). To elaborate his idea, he gives the example of “Locke’s Second Treatise which splits to reveal the limitations of liberty in his double use of the word ‘slave’: first simply descriptively as the locus of legitimate form of ownership, then as a trope for an intolerable, illegitimate, exercise of power” (MM, 1994: 123; italics in original). The play between the similarity and difference then produces a “menace” that could, ironically, undermine colonial authority. “It mocks its power, that power which supposedly makes it imitable” (Bhabha, MM, 1994: 125). It exposes the loopholes inherent to colonial authority and undermines it in the process.

Though Bhabha talks of the significance of ambivalence in very specific context, i.e. the colonial discourse and the relationship between the Coloniser and the Colonised, the central idea of his thesis is the play between similarity and difference (in this case produced by mimicry). For him it is the Colonised’s similarity to the Coloniser that undermines colonial authority based on difference.

If the idea of the play between similarity and difference were to be extrapolated to the situation of the interaction amongst individual diasporic identities, then each identity with its multiple facets might be similar and yet different from other identities in the diasporic group. Continuous ‘slippage’ is thereby produced due to varying degrees of overlaps and affiliations between members of a diasporic group. Slippage in this context becomes the difference that does not overlap and lead to affiliations amongst individual diasporic identities. Unlike the case of colonial authority, where the issue of similarity to the Coloniser was menacing, here it is the difference that becomes the problem. Any authority that tries to produce a composite, unified and essentialised identity of a diasporic group must hegemonically defer internal difference. This authority may or may not originate from inside the group. For instance, in the case of post-9/11 discourses on Islam, the acts of terror perpetrated in the name of Islam reveal the conception of Islamic culture as a unified monolithic culture by some members of the religious group. On the other hand, the rampant implications of anti-terror legislation in Britain signifies the authority
from outside the group that overlooks the differences between individual Muslim identities. Both produce and nurture hegemonies with regard to diverse Islamic cultures.

Recognising the ‘slippage’ between the individual identities, and the ambivalence it leads to, is then a ‘mocking’ of the unified, essentialised conception of identity, a powerful tool to undermine traditional authority-driven ways of looking at identity. Intra-cultural ambivalence is therefore an important factor in the study of cultural identities and diasporic identities. It highlights the differentiated nature of these identities and questions through moments of slippage the hegemonic conception of a unified diasporic culture and its members as a monadic entity. It questions the singularity of a British South Asian culture or of a British South Asian diasporic identity, or in the post-9/11 and 7/7 context, the singularity of a British Muslim identity.

1.2. Representation

Integral to Stuart Hall’s understanding of identities is the concept of representation. It is by the way of representation that an individual makes sense of his or her self and surroundings. The process involves making connections from an object or person which an individual sees, or an emotion that an individual feels, to the concepts that are in the brain to give meaning through language to these and make them communicable. Hall defines it as follows:

Representation is the production of meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (1997: 17; italics in original).

Representation is a two step process consisting of two “systems of representation”. The first involves relating the experienced in the real or the imaginary world to a concept in the brain. This process also entails making connections or telling apart differences between the experienced, and “organising, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts” based on similarities and differences to form a “conceptual map” (Hall 1997:17). Conceptual maps depend on culture. Individuals belonging to the same culture are likely to have similar conceptual maps as “[they] are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world [they] inhabit together” (Hall, 1997: 18). The conceptual maps, however, are present in the brain of individuals – “mental representations” (Hall, 1997: 18; italics in original) – and need another step to make them communicable to other individuals. Here, language comes into play.
Language in the form of words (and audio-visual language in the form of sounds and images) consists of signs that refer to mental concepts. Language is the system through which meaning is produced and shared (Hall, 1997: 18-19).

With respect to visual language, where images are the signs (iconic signs), the image looks like the ‘real’ object that it refers to, where as linguistic signs (indexical signs) on the other hand are abstractions and therefore “arbitrary”, made up of a combination of random letters of an alphabet that produces a random sound. However, both are signs as they refer to the real thing (Hall, 1997: 20-21).

1.2.1. The Construction of Meaning: Representation, Language and Culture.

As discussed in the previous section, language consists of random and arbitrary signs. The question then arises, how do these arbitrary signs get meaning – a meaning that is shared through people of the same culture and language. Stuart Hall explains:

The meaning is not in the object or person or thing, nor is it in the word. It is we who fix meaning so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable. The meaning is constructed by the system of representation. It is constructed and fixed by the code, which sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system, in such a way that, every time we think of a tree, the code tells us to use the English word TREE, or the French word ARBRE. The code tells us that, in our culture – that is in our conceptual and language codes – the concept ‘tree’ is represented by the letters T, R, E, E, arranged in a certain sequence (Hall, 1997: 21; italics in original).

Culture then implies not just the sharing of conceptual and language systems but also the sharing of codes that form the connection between the two systems and fix meanings. They form the bridge between signs and concepts and render communication meaningful. Whether it is listening or reading, they are critical in the process of understanding and in conveying meaning by speaking or writing. The fixing of meaning in codes is a “result of social conventions” (Hall, 1997: 22). A group of people sharing a certain conceptual system and a language “over time, and without conscious decision or choice, come to an unwritten agreement, a sort of unwritten cultural covenant that, in their [language], certain signs will stand for or represent certain concepts” (Hall 1997: 22). By learning this system of codes individuals become “culturally competent” and learn to make sense of themselves, their surroundings and the relationship between the two (Hall, 1997: 22). Codes, however, are culturally specific and not universal or natural, they are produced through some kind of consensus based on social conventions and
therefore “meaning does not inhere in things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is a result of a signifying practice – a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean” (Hall, 1997: 24; italics in original).

1.2.2. Theories of Representation

The concept of representation can be looked at in different ways. Reflective or mimetic approaches can be used to explain the relationship between reality and its representation emphasizing the closeness of the two. As a mirror reflects an object, similarly language, the means of representation, is said to reflect reality. Particularly, in the case of visual language, the image might be actually very close to the ‘real’ thing, however, it is still a sign. It is a two dimensional representation of the ‘real’ thing. But what happens in the case of fantasy, where the ‘real’ is replaced by the ‘imaginary’? The imaginary also finds representation through language, for instance, in science fiction films and literature, where the imaginary is explored through the means of visual and linguistic signs respectively.

A second approach to representation is called the intentional. “It holds that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the word through language. Words mean what the author intends them to mean” (Hall, 1997: 25). This approach, however, excludes the understanding of language as a means of communication based on a shared fixing of meanings in codes. It looks at representation as an arbitrary choice solely dependent on the individual (Hall, 1997: 25).10

The constructionist or the constructive approach is the third significant way of understanding the relationship between representation and reality. It emphasizes the social nature of language, and shared meanings of concepts that a culture has. It sees representation as a symbolic construction of meaning.

Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world ['reality'] which conveys meaning: it is language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about the world meaningfully to others (Hall, 1997: 25).

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10 If construction of identity is looked at the process of representing the Self (making intelligible what the Self means) then the intentional approach implies a completely autonomous construction of identity, like that in the case of the Cartesian subject.
The process of communication is based on using symbols to “stand for” or signify certain concepts (Hall, 1997:25).

Hall illustrates the complex process of signification through the example of traffic lights. He explains that the light (the real thing itself) is sensed by humans in different colours (concept) by the means of which we classify them and name them through an ‘arbitrary’ word – red, amber and green (signs). The code in the context of the traffic lights then becomes: red – stop, amber – get ready and green – go. The codes can vary, however, in different contexts (even inside a culture). Red in the context of politics stands, for instance, for communism/ far left and green in the same context for environmentalism. As the signs are arbitrary the choice of colours used in a traffic light are also arbitrary according to constructionists (Hall, 1997: 26-27). “This is because what signifies is not the colours themselves but (a) the fact that they are different and can be distinguished from one another; (b) the fact that they are organized into a particular sequence” (1997: 27). The process of signification, therefore, following the constructionist approach lies in the fact that there is a difference between red and green. The recognition of this difference makes the production of meaning “relational” (Hall, 1997: 27). It is because of the relation that red is not green that the meaning of red as stop is comprehensible (Hall, 1997: 27).

1.2.3. The Constructionist Approach to Representation: Structuralism and Semiotics

The constructionist approach to representation can be seen in the approach of Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure to linguistics (Hall, 1997: 30). Saussure’s theory of linguistics regards “language as a system of signs” (Culler, 1976: 19). He breaks up the concept of the sign into two components - signifiers for language and words and signifieds for mental concepts. Signs, then, are understood as the relationship between the signifieds and the signifiers, a relationship that is rooted in codes which are culturally fixed. The sign is the representational relationship between the signifieds and the signifiers and, as the constructionists understand it, is arbitrary in nature. “There is no natural or inevitable link between the signifier and the signified [Signs] are members of a system and are defined by their relations to other members of that system” (Culler, 1976: 24).

Like in Hall’s example of the traffic light to explain the constructionist approach, difference plays a key role for Saussure in the process of meaning production. Based on this
difference Saussure argues that language (signifiers) is organised into a system of binaries. Meaning then, produced through the process of signification, rests upon “the differences between signifiers” (Hall, 1997: 32).

Saussure’s theory on language also says that though meanings are fixed through social and cultural codes, these are not fixed permanently, and are prone to change.

Words [signifiers] shift their meanings. The concepts (signifieds) to which they refer also change, historically, and every shift alters the conceptual map of the culture, leading different cultures at different historical moments to classify and think about the world differently (Hall, 1997: 32).

Jonathan Culler explains further: “Because it is arbitrary, the sign is totally subject to history, and the combination at the particular moment of a given signifier and signified is a contingent result of historical process” (1976: 36).

In spite of the recognition that meaning is historical, not permanent and prone to change Saussure concentrates on the state of language at a given historical moment. However, by recognising the possibility that meanings of signifiers can change and language is a dynamically developing entity, the process of representation is open to “constant ‘play’ or slippage of meaning to constant production of new meanings, new interpretations” (Hall, 1997: 32).

Saussure’s approach to linguistics is taken a step further to culture and cultural practices by Roland Barthes. Barthes argues in his collection of essays, Mythologies, that culture can be read in ways similar to what Saussure suggests for language, as composed of signs which communicate meaning. He takes the example of a wrestling match and analyses the bodies’ gestures and actions between the opponents as signs carrying meanings which can be read much like in theatre. The wrestling match as a cultural practice becomes a text worthy of interpretation (WW, 1972: 15-25). Barthes approach, known as semiotics, understands not just “words and images but objects” as signifiers (Hall, 1997: 37). Stuart Hall explains this with the example of clothes. How an individual dresses, for instance, can be read and interpreted as referring to concepts like “elegance”, “formality”, “casualness” etc. (1997: 37).

In his book, Elements of Semiology (1967), Barthes explains how this signification actually works by breaking up the sign and production of meaning into processes of denotation and connotation. The first denotation refers to the descriptive level in the production of meaning. To expand the example of clothes as signs, which Hall suggests: for an individual wearing jeans
and a t-shirt, the denotative meaning would be jeans and t-shirt, a meaning which cannot be readily disputed. However, the meaning produced through implication is another matter. Clothes - jeans and t-shirt - could come refer to concepts (signifieds) like casualness, opening up a whole new spectrum called connotation. The level of connotation is based on interpretation and contextualisation. It is not just a matter of reading but reading signs actively, interpreting them as carriers of meaning “in the wider realm of social ideology – the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society” (Hall, 1997: 38-39).

In *Myth Today* Barthes explains how the connotative meaning or myth is generated.

[M]yth is a peculiar system, in which, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative complex of a concept and an image) becomes a mere signifier in the second (1972: 114).

Returning to the example of clothes, if the image is an individual wearing jeans and t-shirt, the sign - jeans and t-shirt – the denotative meaning, goes on to become the a signifier for production of further meaning on the connotative level or myth - casualness, for instance. Casualness could further be looked at as a sign and interpreted further.

It can be seen that in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to another: a linguistic system, the language (or the modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call language-object, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build its own system; and myth itself which I shall call meta-language, because it is a second language in which one speaks about the first (Barthes, MT, 1972: 115).

1.2.4. From Signs to Narratives of Culture: From Meaning to Knowledge

Understanding single words, images, acts or objects as signs that, through their representative function and interpretive capacity, generate meaning, is emphasized in the semiotic and structuralist approaches. The fact that signs do not exist singularly in the process of meaning production, but always in groups, in larger conglomerations, is recognised by Jacques Derrida. As previously noted, his theory on ‘differénce’ states that meaning production is never a completed process. The binary system of signs that Saussure advocates is not capable of fully producing meaning. One sign is never enough to generate complete meaning, and other signs need to be added in an attempt to create meaning. Derrida calls this ‘deferral’ - the indefinite and continuous postponement of completion or finality of meaning through continuous addition of
signs, which in turn need more signs (1982: 9). A group of signs hence will need more signs, and a single narrative more, in a never ending process to produce meaning. Derrida’s understanding links meaning production firstly, to larger cultural entities, i.e. narratives (here, meant as group of signs) and emphasizes the non-fixedness or the dynamicity of meaning. However, history reveals that meanings have been fixed and naturalised as knowledge.

[In a culture, meaning often depends on larger units of analysis- narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate across a variety of texts, areas of knowledge about a subject which have acquired wide spread authority [...] Representation [then can be viewed as] as a source for production of social knowledge – a more open system, connected in intimate ways with social practices and questions of power (Hall, 1997: 42; italics in original).

The production of knowledge as discourse, with some individuals having more power than others in determining what this knowledge is, has been the central focus of Michel Foucault’s work. According to Hall, discourse as understood by Foucault is a set of norms that regulate the way individuals perceive and talk about the world. It is the process by which meaning is made into knowledge. It “‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, ‘rules out’, limits restricts other ways of talking, conducting oneself in relation to the topic” (Hall, 1997: 44).

By the selection of certain ways of expression and denying validity to others, the discourse controls what has meaning and what not (Hall, 1997: 45). By means of construction of knowledge discourse fixes meanings, reflecting the constructionist approach to representation. The historical specificity of a discourse, however, renders knowledge changeable, allowing different ways of looking at things or expression at different historical moments.

[It] is not a change of content (refutation of old errors, recovery of old truths), nor is it a change of theoretical form (renewal of paradigm, modification of systematic ensembles). It is question of what governs statements, and the way that they govern each other to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable (Foucault, 1980: 112; italics in original).

The object itself about which this knowledge is produced through representation does not play much of a role in the process of change; it is the way it is spoken about that changes. Taking the example of mental illness, Foucault highlights the fact that the understanding of what mental illness is not an ahistorical thing/‘real object’ with an inherent meaning. It a discursive formation that changes in time and from culture to culture (Hall, 1997: 46).
First hypothesis – and the one that, at first sight struck me as being the most likely and most easily proved: statements different in form, and dispersed in time, form a group if they refer to one and the same object. Thus, statements belonging to psychopathology all seem to refer to an object that emerges in various ways in individual and social experience and which may be called madness. But I soon realized that the unity of the object of ‘madness’ does not enable one to individualize a group of statements, and to establish between them a relation that is both constant and describable. There are two reasons for this. It would certainly be a mistake to try to discover what could have been said of madness at a particular time by interrogating the being of madness itself, its secret content, its silent self-enclosed truth; mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own. Moreover, this group of statements is far from referring to a single object, formed once and for all, and to preserving it indefinitely as its horizon of inexhaustible ideality (Foucault, 1972: 32; my emphasis).

Foucault’s discussion on mental illness exposes the power of those who represent in the process of construction of knowledge. In this case of mental illness, for instance, the psychiatrist, deems/defines what madness is or is not.

1.2.5. Power, Knowledge: ‘Truths’?
As elaborated in the previous section, the production of knowledge entails representation and creates discourses which determine the way things (objects of representations) are perceived or spoken about. The regulatory power that is inherent to the production of knowledge, according to Foucault, lies in the fact that certain ways of looking at things and expressing are ‘allowed’ and others ‘not allowed’, rendered meaningless, by those who produce knowledge. Moreover fields of knowledge, like the previous example of psychiatry, are associated strongly with a “whole range of institutions, economic requirements and political issues of social regulation” (Foucault, 1980: 109). These structures that regulate knowledge, is what Foucault calls “apparatus”. In his words,

the apparatus is essentially strategic in nature, which means it is a matter of certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilising them, utilising them etc. The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge, which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it. This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge (1980: 196; my emphasis).
For the apparatus to have the authority/status to produce knowledge, it needs to legitimise itself. This it does by legitimising the knowledge that it produces as ‘truth’ by its application to the real world. In its application to the real world and “becom[ing] true, knowledge, insofar as having “real effects” becomes powerful and “regulate[s] the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and disciplining of practices” (Hall, 1997: 49). Foucault calls this aspect of the relationship between knowledge and power the “regime of truth”.

Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980: 131).

Furthermore, Foucault talks of how power does not always originate from a single source and is enforced on others, rather it is much more complex and “is employed and exercised through a net like organization” (Foucault, 1980: 98). Power is not always “repressive” (Foucault, 1980: 119) rather it can be productive as well.

In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of power; one identifies power with a law which always says no; power is taken above all as carrying a force of prohibition. Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? (Foucault, 1980: 119).

To sustain itself, power has to allow for certain things as it disallows others. Its nature is ambivalent as, if it prohibits things, it also “produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault: 1980: 119).

In summary, for Foucault, knowledge which is representation cannot be separated from power. Foucault looks not just at signs and meaning but bigger entities of social life, narratives that produce knowledge. In spite of its inherent representational nature, knowledge claims some ‘reality’ quotient through the aspect of ‘truth’, which it needs to sustain itself and legitimise its production. Recognising the workings of the discourse and how production of knowledge is linked to power is imperative to understand relations between the Coloniser and the Colonised. Understanding Colonialism as a discourse that produces knowledge about the colonial subject
(both Coloniser and Colonised), their identities, certain ‘truths’ about these that have been used to sustain power can be deconstructed.

1.3. Colonial Discourse

Previous sections have discussed issues of identity as making meaning of the subject and underlined that this process is essentially a form of representation. Representation itself is a complex process which involves the politics of power in discourse. In spite of the contemporary theoretical understanding of identities as multifaceted and heterogeneous, never fixed but rather dynamic and ambivalent, the fact that they are representations and are forms of knowledge, subjects them to the power play of the discourse. The fixedness in the form of truth that the knowledge power configuration demands also has implications for identities. This is apparent in identity constructions in many discourses of oppression like the colonial discourse. Certain identities are marginalised with respect to others, and hierarchies are created. Stuart Hall asks in this regard the critical question - who has the power to represent? And what does the representation entail (NE, 1996: 164)?

1.3.1. The Object and Subject of Representation

By posing the questions, who represents whom, (i.e. who creates the knowledge about whom and legitimises it as ‘truth’), or who is the subject and who is the object of representation, Stuart Hall begins to examine the “relations of representation” (NE, 1996: 164). The question with respect to the orientalist discourse has been tackled amongst others by Edward Said in his book Orientalism. The Orient, which forms a major part of the former colonised world is, according to Edward Said, “almost a European invention” (2001: 1). Orientalism, according to him, is a discourse, a body of knowledge,

a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”. Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between the East and the West as a starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind”, destiny and so on. [...] Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-

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1 Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha challenges this with the concept of ambivalence, discussed earlier. He shows how the fixedness is but a façade on which colonial authority rests (MM, 1994: 121-131).
dealing with it by making statements about it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (2001: 2-3; my emphasis).

By means of producing knowledge, “European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” (Said, 2001: 3). Said’s exploration of the orientalist discourse traces how, in many discursive fields, knowledge about the Orient, truths were produced and legitimised by Europeans. Accompanying first European exploration and then military expansion resulting in colonisation the knowledge produced about the Orient and its sanctioning as truth legitimised their domination. The authority that came with military power was reinforced through the discourses that produced the Colonised as in need of domination. The cyclic process of legitimising power through knowledge and vice-a-versa was based on the aspect of difference, the Coloniser or the Occidental as different from the Colonised or Oriental, the Self (subject of representation) as different from the Other (object of representation). This cyclic process of strengthening of the discourse and its power is what Stuart Hall calls “politics of representation” (NE, 1996: 165). In his view “how things are represented, and the ‘machineries’ of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event role” (NE, 1996:165).

1.3.2. Exploring Difference: Meanings of Self and the Other

The colonial discourse and the orientalist discourse constructs the Colonised and the Orient through the means of producing knowledge about it, i.e. representing it. However, it is not just the question of who produces this knowledge, i.e. who is the subject of representation and who is the object of representation (the represented), that plays a role in determining power relations. Equally important is the aspect of difference that governs the produced knowledge and representation.

Edward Said identifies representations of the Orient predicated on difference as the Other of the Occident.

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it also is the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural

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12 If this were the only criteria determining power relations and their asymmetry, then in the context of this work, any film or television text made by a white British person, depicting South Asians, would be considered problematic and a racialised representation, by mere virtue of it being made by a white British person.
contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience (2001: 1-2).

The contrast or difference is not just way of defining the Other, the Orient, the Colonised, but it is the difference from the Self that helps defining the Self.

Returning to Saussure, the fundament of the process of meaning production lies in the recognition of difference. Hall explains, taking the example of black and white:

We know what black means, Saussure argued, not because there is some essence in ‘blacness’ but we can contrast it with its opposite – white. Meaning, he argued, is relational. It is the ‘difference’ between white and black that signifies, which carries meaning” (1997: 234; italics in original).

Sets of contrasts, i.e. binary oppositions are therefore essential in this view for the production of meaning. Binary oppositions, though they are important in the process of meaning production, “are open to the charge of being reductionist and over-simplified – swallowing up all distinctions in their rather rigid two-part structure” (Hall, 1997: 235). In the case of black and white, for instance, the question as to a signification of grey is not accommodated (Hall, 1997: 235).

Moreover, for Derrida, binary oppositions are always present in a hierarchical relationship to each other which need deconstruction (Hall, 1997: 235). In Margins of Philosophy, he explains: “[A]n opposition of metaphysical concepts (for example, speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination” (Derrida, 1982: 329). A binary opposition uses the principle of negation, (for instance, black is black because it is not white, or the Self is the Self because it is not the Other), difference is formed in setting a presence against an absence. This configuration that involves presence against absence leads to a hierarchical relationship between the opponents of the binary. To go beyond these hierarchical binary oppositions and re-imagine and re-constitute new processes of meaning production is the task of deconstructionist critique (Derrida, 1982: 330).13

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13 Derrida’s concept of différence here, explained in earlier sections, depicts the volatile nature and instability, or the ‘partial’ nature of terms. Each opponent of the binary is subjected to différence as it does not just differ, but also defers its essential meaning. The concept of différence is an important tool in the process of deconstruction. Spivak unveils the limits of deconstructionist methodology by arguing that a postcolonial scholar can never really take a position outside the Western system of language/thought, imbued with its binaries and related hierarchies, to deconstruct the colonial discourse (Spivak, 1999: 426-427).
Binary oppositions and difference are also explored in Russian linguist Mikhail Bhaktin’s work, *The Dialogic Imagination*. Analysing the discourse in the literary genre of the novel, Bhaktin looks at how meaning is generated in a dialogue that needs two or more parties. “[Meaning] does not belong to any one speaker. It arises in the give-and-take between different speakers” (Hall, 1997: 235).

The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own (Bhaktin, 1981: 293-294).

Adding to the dynamicity of language, culture and representations, Bhaktin’s use of the terms ‘appropriation’ and ‘intention’ render the Self as well as the Other as agents. Meaning needs the binaries, but these binaries can be appropriated. That binaries can be appropriated and the Self and the Other are active agents in the dialogic process of meaning production, is, according to Hall, a “positive” understanding of Bhaktin’s theory. The negotiable nature of meaning, however, fails to explain the historical fixedness of meanings (Self and the Other) in ‘truths’ that lead to asymmetrical power relations and hierarchies created by means of representation in discourses of oppression like the colonial discourse. It does not take into account the critical question: who has the power to represent? (Hall, 1997: 236).

The anthropological view on the Self and the Other in culture understands meaning as generated through a “classificatory system. The marking of ‘difference’ is thus the basis of the symbolic order which we call culture” (Hall, 1997: 236). For cultures to have stability in meaning, boundaries must be drawn, which implies an outside and an inside, an acceptable and a not acceptable. The Self which is the inside is then acceptable, whereas the different Other is rendered “impure and abnormal” (Hall, 1997: 236-237). According to Hall, this understanding reveals the paradoxical nature of difference. By virtue of being not-acceptable, “forbidden and taboo”, it is “strangely attractive” (1997: 237). This paradoxical dual effect of difference between the Self and the Other is also the basis of the aspect of desire fundamental in psychoanalytical theories of understanding how an individual makes sense of him/herself, and the world.
As touched upon in the section on identities, psychoanalysis also lays a huge emphasis on difference in creation of meaning of the Self and the Other. Taking sexual identity as its basis, Freud and later Lacan use the story of Oedipus from Greek mythology to describe how the psyche functions in giving meaning to the Self, always however in relation to the Other. In the process of development, individuals recognise their sexual difference from their parent. Hall explains Freud’s Oedipus complex:

At a certain point a boy develops an unconscious erotic attraction to the Mother, but finds the Father barring his way to ‘satisfaction’. However, when he discovers that women do not have a penis, he assumes that his Mother was punished by castration, and that he might be punished in the same way if he persists with his unconscious desire. In fear, he switches his identification with his old ‘rival’, the Father taking on the beginnings of an identification with masculine identity (Hall, 1997:237).

What the Oedipus complex elaborates is the intricate nature of the process of giving meaning to the Self captured between looking at the Other as desirable and forbidden at the same time. Lacan takes Freud a step further in his conception of the mirror stage in the development of the Self. The first conscious recognition of the Self is by looking at the Other (mother) in the reflection of the mirror. By seeing its mother holding it up to the mirror, the child also sees how the mother relates to its own reflection, i.e. with love and desire. The child experiences its own reflection as something different from itself (the Other), something desirable and something that it wants to attain. The process that follows, called misrecognition, is an identification constructed across a lack, a lack that leads to desire but which has to be constantly overlooked/bridged over to produce coherent meaning of the Self.

It is this reflection from outside, or what Lacan calls the ‘look from the place of the Other’, during the ‘mirror-stage’, which allows the child for the first time to recognize itself as a unified subject, relate to the outside world, to the ‘Other’, develop language and take on a sexual identity (Hall, 1997: 237).

The Other is therefore fundamental in making meaning of the Self.

Though the significance of difference in creation of meaning is uncontested in all the above explanations, it rests between something that is necessary on the one hand, and on the other “is threatening, a site for danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the ‘Other’ (Hall, 1997:238).

In the context of the orientalist discourse and colonial discourse, difference from the Self forms the fundament of representations of the Orient and the Colonised. It does not just
characterise the Other, but by means of the contrast created, characterises the Self. The ambivalence of difference, however, is overshadowed by use of difference as Hall suggests in a ‘negative sense’ (1997: 238).

The power/knowledge configuration comes into play not just by means of the question asked earlier: Who represents whom? but also: What do these representations entail? In other words one could ask the question: What kind of ‘truths’ are created through representations about the Self and the Other, about the Colonised and the Coloniser, about the Orient and the Occident?

1.3.3. Difference and Race: The Black/White Binary

The aspect of difference is necessary to the creation of meaning, creation of identities of the Self and the Other. What attributes and characteristics does the Other have? Specific to the colonial discourse, the question of the attributes and characteristics of the Colonised in representations becomes critical.

The European encounter with alterity and the effects of it in the post-Enlightenment period can be understood as a combination of a multitude of factors. The advent capitalist forms of economy combined with a revamping of the definition of culture that came with rationalism taking the centre stage were significant amongst these. The culture/nature distinction, which has its origin in Christianity, took on new dimensions. The inhabiting and cultivating of soil, i.e. “agri-culture”, as one of the older meanings of the term, already differentiated between settled populations as “cultured” and the “nomadic tribes” as unsettled and hence “uncultured” (Young, 1995: 31).

From the sixteenth century this sense of culture as cultivation, the tending of natural growth, extended to the process of human development, cultivation of the mind. In the eighteenth century it came to also the intellectual side of civilization, the intelligible as against the material [...] The OED cites 1764 as the date that ‘cultured’ was first used in the sense of ‘refined’ (Young, 1995: 31).

Meanings of culture applied to humans now came to distinguish between the “civil and the savage: to be civilized meant to be a citizen of the city (preferably walled), as opposed to the savage (wild man) outside, or the more distant barbarian roaming in the lands beyond” (Young, 1995: 31). The association of culture to the notion of civilization was seen in the progressive and teleological conception of history, its end point, its ideal in what was considered refined,
civilized social structure (Young, 1995: 32). Barbarism or savagery were to be overcome by the civilized and refined and were therefore lower in hierarchy.

In this light, confrontation with difference that European exploration and occupation in the post-Enlightenment era brought gained new meaning. Though difference was experienced in various spheres of life - political, social, religious, and cultural - the most visible marker of difference was race (Chatterjee: 1993, 20). Race became the key carrier of difference and came to be associated with other connotations that emphasized Eurocentric ideology. The rational anthropological view on the culture/nature, i.e. culture as superior to nature, culture as civilized and a way of controlling nature which is unruly, barbaric and savage, eclipsed other differences encountered by Europeans in the various spheres. These were reduced to the binary opposition white/black, which as a result came to be loaded with connotations.

Stuart Hall explains what the binary opposition black/white came to mean.

There is a powerful opposition between ‘civilization’ (white) and ‘savagery’ (black). There is an opposition between biological or bodily characteristics of the ‘black’ and ‘white’ races, polarised into their extreme opposites- each signifiers of an absolute difference between human ‘types’ or species. There are rich distinctions that are clustered around this supposed link, on the one hand, between the white ‘races’ and intellectual development – refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and law, and a ‘civilized’ restraint in their emotional, sexual and civic life, all of which are associated with ‘Culture’; and on the other hand, the link between the black ‘races’ and whatever is instinctual – the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of ‘civilized refinement in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual, and the lack of developed civil institutions, all of which are linked to ‘Nature’ (1997: 243).

Further ‘evidence’ produced in the empirical fields of science like ethnography, anthropology or biology was used to justify the claim. According to David Green,

[s]ocio-cultural differences among human populations became subsumed within the identity of the individual human body. In the attempt to trace the line of determination between the biological and the social, the body became the totemic object, and its very visibility the evident articulation of nature and culture (as quoted in Hall, 1997: 31-32).

Difference was proclaimed to be hereditary like skin colour, and was inscribed on the body. “The body itself and its differences were visible for all to see, and thus provided ‘the incontrovertible evidence’ for a naturalization of racial difference” (Hall, 1997: 244; my emphasis).
The racialised Other, who was born this way and therefore could not be changed and would always remain different, was further circulated through representations, literary and visual. The sole signifier of skin colour came to connote traits and attributes. The reductionist process of signifying difference through a single aspect and representing it as “fixed in Nature” is understood as stereotyping, a practice widely used in discourses of discrimination and domination as seen in the colonial discourse and even the post-decolonisation discourse of race relations (Hall, 1997: 249).

1.3.4. The Representational Practice of the Stereotype

In his discussion of what a stereotype is, Richard Dyer refers to Walter Lippman’s understanding of the term. Walter Lippman, who coined the term, defines the function of stereotypes as follows:

A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defences we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy (as quoted in Dyer, 1993: 11).

For Dyer, this definition points towards some significant aspects of how stereotypes work in structuring thinking processes; however, it does not look at power issues involved in production of stereotypes of the Other. Dyer considers four aspects very significant “(i) an ordering process, (ii) a ‘short cut’, (iii) referring to ‘the world’ and (iv) expressing ‘our’ values and beliefs” (1993: 11). Taking the first aspect into account he acknowledges that there exists in all societies an inherent necessity to categorise and classify reality by looking for “generalities, patternings and ‘typifications’” in the process of making meaning. The problem for him arises when the limitations of such a process are not recognised - that reality is dynamic, changing and relative, and destabilises the ordering process, because things might not always fit into the categories they are supposed to fit into (1993: 12). With regard to the second aspect of short cuts, stereotypes are simplifications; thus a matter of reduction is involved in the process, where some aspects of reality are chosen to be literally represented and the others not. However, they refer to a whole gamut of connotations. He illustrates this with T.E. Perkins’ example of the ‘dumb blonde’:
to refer ‘correctly to someone as ‘dumb blonde’, and to understand what is meant by that, implies a great deal more than hair colour and intelligence. It refers immediately to her sex, which refers to her status in society, her relationship to men, her inability to behave or think rationally, and so on. In short it, implies knowledge of a complex social structure (as quoted in Dyer, 1993: 13).

The process of stereotyping is supposed to refer to reality, or the ‘world’ as Lippman chooses to put it. Richard Dyer considers stereotypes in this regard as a sub-category of the broader term “types”. “Types” for him are what refer to reality. They are

constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or ‘develop’ [...] and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world (whether these features are conceptualized as universal and eternal, the ‘archetype’, or historically and culturally specific, ‘social types’ and stereotypes) (1993: 13).

The general classification or “typing”, as Stuart Hall calls it, is a mechanism by which meaning is made, similar to the linguistic approach explained earlier on in the section on representations.

We understand the world by referring individual objects, people, events in our heads to the general classificatory schemes into which – according to our culture – they fit. Thus we ‘decode’ a flat object on legs on which we place things as a ‘table’. We may have never seen that kind of ‘table’ before, but we have a general concept or category of ‘table’ in our heads, into which we ‘fit’ the particular objects we perceive or encounter. In other words, we understand ‘the particular’ in terms of its ‘type’ (1997: 257).

If types are generalised classificatory schemata that are essential to meaning, what is special about stereotypes? Both are essentialising and reducing in their function.

The distinction between social types and stereotypes comes in the fourth point that Dyer makes with regard to Lippman’s definition “expression of ‘our’ values and beliefs” (1993: 11). The use of ‘our’ also invokes the presence of ‘their’, a ‘we’ and a ‘them’, an inside and an outside or a drawing of boundaries. Whereas the social type refers to those “within”, the stereotype refers to those “beyond the pale” (Dyer, 1993: 15). Whereas social types are “more open and flexible” like in the example of fiction that Dyer uses, roles such as “hero”, “villain”, etc, are stereotypes that are rigid and absolute in character (1993: 14-15). This practice of “‘closure’ and exclusion [and the symbolic fixing of boundaries]” is what sets stereotypes apart from other forms of typing (Hall, 1997: 258).
The process of stereotyping works by naturalisation of specific ideas or traits about the Other. This is generated in through a general consensus about what the stereotype entails.

The effectiveness of stereotypes resides in the way they invoke a consensus. ‘This is what everyone – you, me and us – thinks members of such-and-such social group are like’, as if concepts of these social groups were spontaneously arrived at by all members of society independently and in isolation. The stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, as if this agreement arose before, and independently of, the stereotype. Yet for the most part it is from stereotypes that we get our ideas about social groups (Dyer, 1993: 14, italics in original; bold my emphasis).

In other words, the general consensus that the stereotype rests on derives its stability from the knowledge that the stereotypes contains. It emulates the question: What came first, the chicken or the egg? The stereotype or the knowledge that the stereotype proclaims? The use of stereotype as knowledge about the Other as opposed to the Self, the fixing of this knowledge as a ‘naturalised truth’ in binary oppositions, are instruments through which power is exerted and hierarchies are established. The racialised Other of the colonial and post-decolonisation race relations discourse is stereotyped in a certain way to ensure his/her lower status in a hierarchy.

1.3.5. Hegemony and Power

The concept establishing power through consensus or agreement, described in the previous section as critical to the formation of stereotypes, is what Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci calls hegemony - a means of oppression of the lower classes. Stuart Hall defines Gramsci’s term hegemony as “a form of power based on leadership by a group in many fields of activity at once, so that its ascendancy commands widespread consent and appears natural and inevitable” (1997: 257).

Edward Said, who understands Orientalism as a discourse involving knowledge produced about the Other through representation and power that is maintained through them, also uses the concept of hegemony to describe the effectiveness of the Orientalist discourse.

Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent. In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci identified as hegemony an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength Orientalism is never far from [...] the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying ‘us’
Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more sceptical thinker may have different views on the matter (2001: 7).

The concept of hegemony that underlines the idea of consensus as its basis, reinforces Foucault’s understanding that power functions in a more complex fashion than as a simple uni-directional force exerted in the domination of one group of people by another. It seduces, solicits, induces, wins consent [...] The circularity of power is especially important in the context of representation. The argument that everyone – the powerful and the powerless – is caught up, though not on equal terms, in powers circulation. No one – neither its apparent victims nor its agents – can stand wholly outside its field of operation (Hall, 1997: 261; italics in original).

Understanding stereotypes and the discourses they produce as deriving their sustainability through hegemony (norm or naturalisation by consensus) reveals the ambivalent nature of the power that characterises the relationship between the Coloniser and the Colonised, the Occident and the Orient, the White and the Black.

1.3.6. The Paradox of the Stereotype: The Role of Fantasy

Stereotypes and knowledge about the Colonised that have been employed in discrimination and domination rest on how Otherness is perceived. The process of Othering through the use of stereotypes constructs the Other in a fashion to justify its domination. However, as explained in the previous section, this domination is not a simple process of direct control and oppression, but rather the issue of power works in a more complex way. Kobena Mercer uses Robert Staples’ study on Black masculine identities to suggest that the subjugation of the colonised Other, especially in the case of slavery, involved

the denial of certain masculine attributes, [...] such as authority, familial responsibility and the ownership of property. Through such collective, historical experience black men have adopted certain patriarchal values such as physical strength, sexual prowess, and being in control as a means of survival against the repressive and violent system of subordination to which they are subjected [...] The incorporation of a code of ‘macho’ behaviour is thus a means of recuperating some degree of power over the condition of powerlessness and dependency (1994: 138).
Stuart Hall uses the term “infantilization” to describe the representational practice that denied black men of masculine traits “as a way of symbolically ‘castrating’ the black man (i.e. depriving him of his masculinity’”) (1997: 262). This means of representation serves as a tactic emphasizing the strict demarcation of boundaries between Black and White. By making the Black man an ‘infant’, taking away his masculinity, the representational practice denies the possibility of inter-racial sex, and hence ensures racial purity

The conscious attitude among whites – That ‘Blacks are not proper men, they are just simple children’ – may be a ‘cover’, or a cover up, for a deeper, more troubling fantasy – that ‘Blacks are really super-men, better endowed than whites, and sexually insatiable [...]’ Thus when blacks act ‘macho’, they seem to challenge the stereotype (that they are only children) – but in the process, they confirm the fantasy which lies behind or is the ‘deep structure’ of the stereotype (that they are aggressive, over-sexed and over-endowed). The problem is that blacks are trapped by the binary structure of the stereotype, which is a split between two extreme opposites – and are obliged to shuttle endlessly between them, sometimes being represented as both of them at the same time (1997: 263; italics in original)

14 Robert J.C. Young elaborates various racial theories propounded by European scientists through the 18th and the 19th centuries to advocate the hierarchies of races, spread the fear of miscegenation and prevent inter-racial mixing. He starts with the polygenist theory: “the denial that different peoples can mix at all; any product of a union between them is infertile, or infertile after a generation or two; so that even where people intermingle they retain their own differences” (a theory propagated amongst others by Hitler). The second argument put forward is the “amalgamation thesis”, which does not deny the possibility of inter-mixing but views the product of the intermixing in predominately negative ways. These include the “decomposition thesis: an admission that some ‘amalgamation’ may take place, but that any mixed breeds either die out quickly or revert to one or the other parent ‘types’. Another ‘negative version of the amalgamation thesis, namely the idea that miscegenation produces a mongrel group that makes up a ‘raceless chaos’, merely a corruption of the originals, degenerate and degraded, threatening to subvert the vigour and virtue of the pure races with which they come into contact” (1995: 18; italics in original).

15 Kobena Mercer looks at representation of Black masculinity, exemplifying it in the specific context of slavery, and describes the fantasy that underlies infantalization. “The primal fantasy of the big black penis projects the fear of a threat not only to white womanhood, but to civilization itself, as the anxiety of miscegenation, eugenic pollution and racial degeneration is acted out through white male rituals of racial aggression- the historical lynching of black men in the United States routinely involved the literal castration of the Other’s strange fruit” (1994: 185). Infantalization as a representational practice and the fantasy that lies behind it is, however, more widespread, used in colonial subjugation of people in other parts of the colonized world. Kipling’s infamous “half-devil, half-child” (1982: 602) description of the native with respect to India captures the binary structure of the stereotype that Hall elaborates (1997: 263). The primal fantasy of the rampant sexuality of racial Other, which then in the form of “alleged rape” has been provided as a justification for the practice of lynching of black slaves in the U.S. (1997: 262) also can also be seen in representations of the South Asian subcontinent. The accusation of ‘rape’ of white women by Indian men became a feature of what Jenny Sharpe calls the “mutiny narratives” i.e. narratives depicting the First War of Indian Independence of 1857. The theme of rape continues in fictional representations of colonial India, amongst them E.M. Forster’s canonical work A Passage to India (1924) or Paul Scott’s post-decolonisation series of novels The Raj Quartet (1965-75) made famous by its televised version The Jewel In The Crown (Sharpe, 1993: 1-3).
The stereotype is, therefore, a paradoxical representational practice that shows the entwined nature of reality and fantasy, with reference to the racialised Other. With regard to the question of power, the stereotype shows through this interplay of reality and fantasy how both the Colonised and the Coloniser are entrenched in the sustenance of power and the hierarchies it informs.

Homi Bhabha raises this problematic of the stereotype in the opening lines of his essay *The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism*.

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of Otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated [...] as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved (1994: 94-95; my emphasis).

1.3.7. The Racialised Other: The Object of Fantasy and Desire

The underlying fantasy and its link to sexuality in stereotypes of the racialised Other is explored by Robert J.C. Young in his citation of many examples of anthropological and ethnographic texts from the colonial era. One such example he gives is Thomas Hope’s *An Essay on the Origin and Prospects of Man* (1831). The text starts with describing Blacks as “‘varieties of human races’ with ‘the least cultivation’ as ‘disgusting’, ‘repulsive’, ‘preposterous’ and ‘hideously ugly’” (as quoted in Young, 1995: 96). It then however undergoes a dramatic change:

There are in Africa, to the north of the line, certain Nubian nations, as there are to the south of the line certain Caffre tribes, whose figure, nay even whose features, might in point serve as models for those of an Apollo. Their stature is lofty, their frame elegant and powerful. Their chest open and wide; their extremities muscular and yet delicate. They have foreheads arched and expanded, eyes full, and conveying an expression of intelligence and feeling: high narrow noses, small mouths and pouting lips. Their complexion indeed still dark, but it is a glossy black of marble or of jet, conveying to the touch sensations more voluptuous even than those of the most resplendent white (as quoted in Young, 1995: 96-97).

The text turns from aversion and repulsion towards Blacks to a sexually charged attraction, which finds articulation in “voluptuousness of gleaming blackness” (Young, 1995: 97).

Sander Gilman further explores this connection between sexuality, fantasy and desire with regard to representations of the racialised Other in his work *Difference and Pathology:*

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Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness. He looks at works of European modernist authors and reveals the sexually charged subtext that these carry. One such work he analyses is the Viennese author Peter Altenberg’s *Ashantee*, a text which is a “liberal protest against the exploitation of blacks by a European public with a taste for the exotic” (1985: 111). The text on the surface appears to condemn the exhibition of Blacks as animals in a zoo, which “reveals to us the function of black not only within the fantasy world of Peter Altenberg but also within the world of the modernist text” (Gilman, 1985: 112). One of the sections of this text, entitled “Culture”, describes a dinner party to which two Ashanti women are invited. Gilman analyses this scene as follows:

The dinner party chitchat revolves about the guests perception of a difference between the ‘childlike’ nature of the black woman and (although the word never falls) the ‘adult’ nature of Western women. Our eye in the tale, Peter A., comments quite directly that ‘blacks are children.’ [...] The Other is like a child, different from the mature sensible adult. [...] In Altenberg’s dinner party sketch, the implications of the child as a sexual object become evident when the younger of the two Ashantis is given a ‘wonderful French doll,’ to which she begins to sing. The older of the two ‘suddenly bared her perfect upper body and began to nurse the doll from her magnificent breasts.’ The audience to this spectacle is awed by the naturalness of her action, and one of the guests is moved to say that this is one of the ‘holiest’ moments in her life. The bared breast has a function as a sexual sign of physical maturity, but is given here a clearly contradictory association with ‘childishness’. [...] Here the sign of the breast is that of the ‘girl-woman’: the child with the physical characteristics of the woman (Gilman, 1985: 113).

Not just the guests but the author himself tries to use the child-like metaphor as a cover up for a fantasy driven by sexual attraction. As described in the previous section, here the fear/threat of the over-sexed Black person also masks an unspeakable desire for what his/her sexuality represents. It is this that leads Robert J.C. Young to call colonialism a “desiring machine” (1995: 98).
1.3.8. Disavowal, Fetish and the Stereotype

The stereotype in the colonial discourse, as previously explained, is a form of knowledge about the Other, an articulation of clearly demarcated difference between the Coloniser and the Colonised between White and Black, skin colour being the marker of this difference. It, however, also vacillates between reality and fantasy, the latter masking a desire for the Other. This desire though present, cannot be articulated as it is a taboo, a crossing of the strictly demarcated boundaries between what the binary oppositions Colonised/Coloniser, Black/White imply, boundaries that are most significant in the sustenance of colonial domination. It would imply a similarity with the effect of interracial fertility and would render the theory of miscegenation impossible between the two opposites of the racial binary. Hence it could lead to a potential dismantling of power and domination. However, similarity is also important to facilitate colonial domination, i.e. to recognise the Other as a lesser Self who cannot take care of itself, and therefore needs the Self, reflected in the infantalisation of the native, or as seen in Bhabha’s concept of mimicry discussed earlier in the chapter. This complex process of maintaining yet negating difference present in the paradox of the stereotype is similar the psychoanalytic understanding of the process of disavowal and fetish.

Returning to what has been discussed earlier in the chapter, the Oedipus complex, the concept of difference in Freud’s understanding is first encountered and dealt with in the early stages of development of an individual. The first experience of difference in Sigmund Freud’s context involves the boy child discovering that his mother does not have a penis. This is an alarming experience as it goes against “the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity” (Bhabha, OQ, 1994: 106). It leads to a fear of castration, castration as possible resolution of difference and an affirmation of the sameness. The anxiety/fear is dealt with by a process of substitution, a fetish. It involves disavowal, a “strategy by means of which a powerful fascination or desire is both indulged and at the same time denied” (Hall, 1997: 267; italics in original). Freud explains:

...the fetish is the substitute for the woman’s (the mother’s) penis that the little boy once believed in and – for reasons familiar to us – does not want to give up. ... It is not true that the [male] child ... has preserved unaltered his belief that women have a phallus. He has retained the belief, but he has also given it up. In the conflict between the weight of the unwelcome perception and the force of his counter-wish, a compromise has been reached ... Yes, in his mind the woman has got a penis, in spite of everything; but the penis is no longer the same as it was before. Something else has taken its place, has been appointed its substitute ... (as quoted in Hall, 1997: 267; italics in original).
Though Freud’s concept of fetishism is controversial because of its singular focus on the male child, excluding any concept female fetishism\textsuperscript{16}, it explains the coexistence of two contradictory beliefs, the paradox of the stereotype. Bhabha draws the “functional link” between the two exploring the issue of similarity.

\textit{[I]n Freud’s terms: ‘All men [humans] have penises’, in ours [colonial discourse]: ‘All men have the same skin/race/culture’ – and the anxiety associated with lack and difference – again, for Freud ‘Some do not have penises’; for us ‘Some do not have the same skin/race/culture’. Within discourse, the fetish represents the simultaneous play between metaphor as substitution (masking absence and difference) and metonym (which contagiously registers the perceived lack). The fetish or the stereotype give access to an ‘identity’ which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it (OQ, 1994: 106-107).}

The fact that both similarity and difference have to be maintained in the stereotype simultaneously leads to what Bhabha then introduces as a concept of mimicry, a disavowal of difference, where the Colonised is similar to the Coloniser, but then not quite, i.e. the Anglicised/the English (MM, 1994: 121-131). He cites the title of Frantz Fanon’s groundbreaking work \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} as an embodiment of the concept (OQ, 1994: 107). The title also captures what has been discussed earlier, the sole signifier of difference as skin colour, and its implications in its function as a fetish. “Skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype is the most visible of fetishes, recognised as ‘common knowledge’ in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses” (Bhabha, OQ, 1994: 112).

It functions as a substitute for the inexpressible fantastic desire/threat associated with the Black sexuality (phallus). Fanon, studying the psychopathology of his white patients, describes the subconscious fear/desire nexus:

\textsuperscript{16} Anne McClintock offers a feminist critique of the application of phallocentric, psychoanalytic theory to understand the fetlishistic function of racial stereotypes. She notes: “Reducing racial fetishism to the phallic drama runs the risk of flattening hierarchies of social difference, thereby relegating race and class to secondary status along a primary sexual signifying chain” (1995: 183-184). She does not reject psychoanalysis completely but suggests for a wider understanding for the term fetish. “Far from being merely phallic substitutes, fetishes can be seen as the displacement onto an object (or person) of contradictions that the individual cannot resolve at a personal level. These contradictions may originate as social contradictions but are lived with profound intensity in imagination and flesh. The fetish thus stands at the cross-roads of psychoanalysis and social history, inhabiting the threshold of both personal and historical memory. The fetish marks a crisis in social meaning as the embodiment of an impossible resolution. The contradiction is displaced onto and embodied in a fetish object, which is thus destined to recur with compulsive repetition” (1995: 184).
no longer do we see the black man; we see a penis: the black man has been occulted. He has been turned into a penis. He is a penis. We can easily imagine what [this] can arouse in a young woman from Lyon. **Horror? Desire?** Not indifference, in any case (Fanon, 2008:147; italics in original; my emphasis).

Bhabha further links the stereotype to the Lacanian theory of the Imaginary, i.e. the mirror phase, where the child looks at the mirror for the first time (mis)-“recognises itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational” (OQ, 1994: 110). The process of alienation which is based on the perceived lack (the mis in the mis-recognition - metonym) and yet the bridging of the lack to produce a composite Self image (recognition, metaphor, substitution) can also be seen as reflected in the paradox of the stereotype (OQ, 1994: 110).

The play between the metaphor and the metonym in the process of identification shows two sides of the relationship between the Self and the Other in the Imaginary – the narcissistic/metaphoric (the composite image of the Self) and the aggressive/metonymic side (the threat the image is lacking). Stereotypes of the Colonised, similarly, vacillate between the good and the evil, in the Bhabha’s words “loyal servant” and “Satan” (OQ, 1994: 113) or in Kobena Mercer’s words “negrophilia” and “negrophobia” (1994: 183). Furthermore, stereotypes are fixed through repetition, the continuous “masking” of the “lack”. Therefore, “the *same old* stories of the Negro’s animality, the Coolie’s inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish *must* be told (compulsively) again and afresh, and are differently gratifying and terrifying each time” (Bhabha, OQ, 1994: 111; italics in original)

Another significant factor here is the role of looking, that is, the gaze. Apart from the visibility factor in the role of skin as signifier, the Lacanian theory of the Imaginary as a basis for understanding the stereotype, also places significance on the act of “looking”. Who is looking? And who is the object of the gaze? Bhabha describes this with reference to one of Frantz Fanon’s “primal scenes” in the colonial discourse (OQ, 1994: 108) or “[t]he lived experience of the Black man” (2008: 89) as Fanon himself describes it. It describes a scene where a young girl sees a Black man and reacts: “‘Maman, look, a Negro; I am scared” (Fanon, 2008: 91). From a slight indifferent enjoyment as an initial response to the statement of the little girl, the feeling of complete objectification takes over, an objectification that arises not just from the gaze of the White girl but also from a confrontation of the Black man with his own race.
As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed giving way to an epidermal racial schema [...] I was no longer enjoying myself [...] I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and yes, above all, the grinning [...] 

Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man [...] I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a haemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body [...] I wanted quite simply to be a man among men (Fanon, 2008: 91-92).

The fixing of the visible marker of skin colour as a signifier of attributes is what the girl’s gaze achieves. Her own identity as white is reaffirmed as her “gaze returns to her mother in the recognition and disavowal of the Negroid type” (Bhabha, OQ, 1994: 109). Furthermore, it results in the gaze that the Black man casts on himself which is also an objective gaze, and further intensifies the significance of his own skin colour. The lack of confrontation because of the trauma induced by the recognition of the Self as an object could be interpreted as a form of silent “consent” which Bhabha describes as imperative to the stereotype (OQ, 1994: 109).

As skin colour becomes a fetish characterised by objectification from both sides of the binary, the stereotypes that hinge on them are rendered ambivalent in their reinforcement of the ‘truths’ they proclaim. Although the girl might see the Black man literally as a threat in this experience that Fanon narrates, the threat of Blackness, as explained earlier, also implies a hidden desire in the bigger picture of the Black/White binary. If Blackness is then looked at as an object of desire, the pleasure of viewing becomes significant.

The displacement of the gaze from [black sexuality] to the skin [as the fetish] allows the observers to go on looking while disavowing the sexual nature of their gaze. Ethnology, science, the search for anatomical evidence play the role as the cover, the disavowal, which allows the illicit desire to operate [...] it is all being done in the name of Science, of objective knowledge, ethnological evidence, in the pursuit of Truth (Hall, 1997: 268).

Stereotypes, driven by hidden subjective desires, validate themselves in the colonial discourse as objective and naturalised ‘truths’ about the Other, through means of fetishism and disavowal and form an important instrument of colonial domination, in spite of the fact that they are ambivalent in character.
1.3.9. Challenging Representations of the Racialised and Colonised Other

In light of the discussions above describing the way the colonised and the racialised Other have been represented during the colonial era – fundamentally driven by the skin/race signifier, it is of significance to also probe if and what “counter-strategies” (Hall, 1997: 269) exist/have been used to challenge the dominant representational regime. How can the skin/race complex be liberated from the meanings it has come to be associated with? Hall reminds that meanings are never complete or fixed, and even if stereotypes try to fix meanings, they are prone to change, for instance the meanings associated with Blackness described in previous sections. Bhaktin’s theory of dialogism and Derrida’s theory of différence emphasize the way meanings can change over time (through the action of speakers) and are never a composite fixity (the process of deferral leading to a continuous postponement in fixing). New meanings can be associated with signifiers that previously have had other meanings. Called “trans-coding”, this practice can provide for re-appropriation of signifiers, investing them with new meaning (Hall: 1997: 270).

One of the representational practices that lead to trans-coding is reversal of stereotypes, involving a positive affirmation of values which have in the colonial discourse been traditionally looked upon as negative. Hall explains this with the example of the emergence of a genre of films that use the common associations with blackness in the colonial discourse of aggressiveness and sexuality and show them in a positive “heroic” light, including American productions such as *Sweet Sweetback’s Bad Ass Song* (Melvin Van Peebles, 1971) and *Shaft* (Gordon Parks, 1971) (1997: 270-271).

Stereotypical representation of Blackness as explored in previous sections involves a reductionism and essentialism, an ignoring of the diversity of groups of people and reducing their identities to a few traits that are signified through the singular aspect of skin colour. Another means of contesting this colonial, racist regime of representation of the Other is exposing the diverse or heterogeneous nature of identities of the Colonised/Black. It involves showing identities as multifaceted, context-dependent and not fixed but dynamic. It goes beyond a mere addition of positive associations with Blackness to a discourse where the binaries White/Black, Coloniser/Colonised already exist. It subverts these binaries by exposing their ‘constructed’ nature, and reveals the ambivalence of identities of the Self and the Other.
1.4. Audio-Visual Media as a Discursive Site for Representations of Identities

Identities or the construction of the Self and the Other, as Stuart Hall explains, occurs through a system of signs which stand for, or work as, carriers of meanings. In language these are words that signify concepts, have meanings both in terms of denotations and connotations. The meanings that linguistic signs carry evolve over time, are historic and specific to a context. As seen in the discussions of colonial discourse, Coloniser/Colonised or White/Black, came to carry certain meanings that facilitated asymmetric power relations and domination. Signs that carried these meanings in the colonial discourse were not just linguistic (as in written or oral text) but also visual (pictures, images). With the birth of the medium of film, visual signs have taken on a special role in the area of representation. As moving pictures, audio-visual media texts, from the very beginning, were considered as capable of capturing/reflecting reality (without the interim state of abstraction, i.e. words as signs), and hence providing irrefutable documentation (in the sense of an eye witness) in support of certain ‘historical truths’, be it with regard to colonial discourse or any other discourse. In his essay Geschichtsbilder im Kino: Perspektiven einer Semiohistorie der Audiovisionen, Jürgen E. Müller notes:


Audio-visual media (television or feature films), with this capability of capturing reality, hence provide (in addition to written texts) a rich source for analyses of historical discourses. In his argument for the consideration of film texts as a legitimate archive for historical facts Müller concedes that audio-visual texts are ‘constructed’ – the form and the structure of the text impact the meaning that they carry – and therefore diminish the authenticity for purposes of historical documentation (1998: 408). This, however, only goes to signify the representational value of films involved in a process of production of meaning. Like words, images and moving pictures retain the aspect of being re-presentations (constructions), and hence are none the more authentic than the written word. Connecting this to history, Müller notes, any form of historiography itself is representational – presenting what is inherently absent, by virtue of it being in the past (1998: 416).
In relation to the colonial discourse, a claim to authenticity of ‘facts’ similar to that needed by historiography is the providing justification of oppression of the Colonised. The proof that the Colonised are in need of domination comes from their being represented through the signifier of skin colour alone. Skin colour comes to mean much more than what it literally denotes: it connotes a number of ‘traits’ – aggressiveness, sexual prowess, infant-like attribute, and so on, as discussed earlier. The fixing of such connotations to skin colour of the Colonised occurs through a circulation of signs in various media, written or audio-visual, the “[anxious repetition]” (OQ, 1994: 95) of stereotypes as Bhabha calls it. For the audio-visual medium, recognising the construct character of representation - so called ‘facts’ in historical or other discourses - comes from understanding representation as a complex process which involves selection, framing and montage (1998: 414). The analytic method of “semiohistoric” applies this understanding of audio-visual representations. It aims to link the signs and their connotations in film texts to historical discourses, and production of meanings. Müller explains this through the example of the representation of the cityscape in films. In his view, certain popular notions of what a city should look like and the fact how it comes to be represented in the text are mutually dependent on each other for meaning to be communicated. This meaning often is not the denotative, but the connotative. A shot of the Eifel Tower for instance, does not imply a tower made of steel and cement, but the city of Paris and the number of associations connected to this metropolis.


Jürgen Müller further suggests that, regardless of whether the film text belongs to the factual or fictional genre, signs used in representation interact in the same way with the
connotative meanings and associations already present as mental concepts in society to reproduce meaning. Images, he notes, are used as signs, re-circulated and recycled through various genre of audio-visual texts to generate meanings in line with the expectations of viewers or the already present meanings in the discourse. Genre conventions certainly do play a role in representation and determining viewer expectations to an extent. However, when one considers both the fictional and factual genres of audio-visual media as constructs or re-presentations, then signs and their meanings transgress and obliterate the ontological difference between fact and fiction and are very similar in their discursive function. Both fact and fiction are constructed, are representations, and contribute equally to the discursive claims to establishing ‘truths’. This aspect of looking at representations as providing evidence for certain ‘truths’ is central to analysis using ‘semiohistorie’.

In der Film- und Medienwissenschaft beginnt in jüngster Zeit ein Konsens abzuzeichnen, der „Dokumentarfilme” nicht mehr als simple und „rohe Abbildungen” der Wirklichkeit, sondern vielmehr als komplexe discursive Systeme, die auf der Basis ihrer spezifischen Anordnung von Zeichen eine Bandbreite von nicht allein kognitiven Effekten beim Zuschauer erzeugen (vgl. Hattendorf, 1995, S.8). Wenn sich die Grenzen verwischen [...] dann hat die Semiohistorie diesen Sachverhalt insofern zu berücksichtigen, als sie „das Dokumentarische” oder das „das Fiktionale” von Audiovisionen als Steuerungsfaktor der Interaktion zwischen Zuschauer und audiovisuellem Text (d.h. als einer erwarteten „Authentizität” oder „Fiktionalität”), nicht jedoch als (ontologische) Eigenschaften des audiovisuellen Textes begreift [...] Wir haben fiktionale und dokumentarische Audiovisionen hinsichtlich deren Zeugnischarakter zu befragen (1998: 416; italics in original).

The interaction between factual or fictional representations and the connotative meanings they gather through the process of circulation of signs are applicable to other discourses. For instance, the image of a Muslim woman in a ‘burkha’ in the current socio-political atmosphere invokes a wider range of cultural, religious and gender related meanings and associations than mere clothing.

‘Semiohistorie’ as an analytical method works on the principle of recognising the construct character of representations. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, identities are also constructed in the field of representation. In the colonial discourse and the post-decolonisation race-relations discourse, identities of the Self and the Other, the Coloniser and the Colonised, the White and the Black, the Occidental and the Oriental all have been constructed
through the means of representation, not just through textual medium, but also through audio-visual media. The ‘truths’ that these representations of identities implied or continue to imply facilitate discursive power relations; as in the colonial discourse, these representations have validated the domination of certain groups of people. To debunk the ‘truth’ character of these representations would be to challenge the fundment of asymmetrical power relations in discourses of oppression and domination. ‘Semiohistorie’, in this regard, provides an excellent tool for understanding the workings of a culture.

It is in this light that the following chapter traces the context in which contemporary representations of the British South Asian diaspora in British audio-visual media can be located. Being the ‘former’ Colonised, the Coloured (the Black), the Oriental, contemporary representations of cultural and ethnic minority of the British South Asian diaspora cannot be separated from a history of asymmetric power relations, whether in the social day to day reality of existence, in their experience of immigration and starting anew in Britain or in the history of their representation in audio-visual media. Any analysis of contemporary representations would be incomplete without exploring how ‘truths’ have been created, supported or challenged and subverted in the past with regard to British South Asians.
2. Contextualising the British South Asian Diaspora its Identities and Representations

In order to begin any analysis of contemporary representations of British South Asian identities in British audio-visual media it is imperative to locate them in a context. This context derives from the multiple discourses that affect British South Asian identities. They are intertwined and have determined and continue to determine each other. Apart from the history of audio-visual representations of people of South Asian descent (which is almost as old as the medium of film itself) forming the immediate reference framework to contemporary representations, the changing social, political and cultural circumstances that have not just led to these representations but have themselves been thematised in these representations are critical to this study.

Starting at the historical moment of the Empire, common to all these discourses, is therefore logical. It is the moment that defined both the relationship between South Asians and white Britons, setting them in a racial and cultural hierarchy in the era of colonisation, and was perpetuated in notions of Britishness, contemporary forms of which determine to a large extent the existing race relations in the nation. The ideology of the Empire that drove Britain to become the world’s most powerful nation over an extended period of time, the ‘greatness’ that came to be associated with this power and ideology, and then the sudden loss of this during decolonisation, the major part of which largely followed victory over the Nazis in the Second World War, form significant historical moments, not all of them equally reflected on, in the traditional master narrative of British identity.

To put it quite simply, the ‘lesser’ evils of the Empire have often gone unnoticed and unquestioned as the victory over the ‘most evil’ Nazis, which emphasizes the ‘greatness’ of the British, has taken over as the significant moment in the master narrative. As a result, often a nostalgic gaze that is cast on the era of ‘greatness’ and Empire. To what extent does this discourse take precedence in contemporary notions of British identity is therefore a pivotal question, in the light of its multicultural and multi-ethnic demography consisting of immigrants from former colonies and their progeny. Are their identities incorporated in what being British has come to mean?

This chapter starts by probing the persistence of Empire in notions of Britishness, and reflects on what repercussions this persistence might have on the development of a
heterogeneous notion of British identities and ultimately a non-racialised society in Britain. It then explores the emergence of the South Asian diaspora and its struggles in establishing itself as a diaspora, being both British and South Asian and being recognised as such, as well as its battles against imperial and racist ideologies and their manifestations which cannot be overlooked. The second section of this chapter is a historical account of arrival of South Asians in Britain, the former colonial centre, their efforts at beginning a new life, their experience of alienation and discrimination at various levels and their diverse means to combat it. The key moments in this journey have become a vital part of the cultural memory of British South Asians, and therefore are an important motif in their representations. In fact the struggle against discrimination and alienation is also mirrored in the struggle for self-representation. It is this aspect that forms the third and final section of the chapter, outlining the history of representations of people of South Asian descent in British audio-visual media, citing key texts from different genre of television and film. It elaborates the move from being represented as an undifferentiated group, where stereotypes ruled, to the recognition of heterogeneity and self-representation to a political end and finally towards a more mainstream mode of representation.

2.1. Notion of Britishness and the Legacy of the Empire

What does it mean to be British? How does one define Britishness? These highly provocative and contested questions are crucial when viewed against the diverse, multi-ethnic, multicultural demographic reality of Britain of the 21st century. According to Trevor Phillips, the chairperson of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (formerly the Commission of Racial Equality), the idea of multiculturalism leads to segregation in so far that monocultures exist together with minimal interaction. He propagates an inculcation of British values in immigrant communities and stresses that this is indeed what defines being British. He makes this somewhat abstract idea concrete by mentioning “belief in democracy and the rule of law” as being fundamental to being British (Race Chief Wants Integration Push, 3 Apr 2004).

By defining the essence of being British singularly in the political realm, the Commission of Racial Equality (the Equality and Human Rights Commission) remains ambiguous about other unifying social and cultural aspects which may inform British national identity today. It repeatedly emphasizes the importance of accepting diversity in cultural aspects. In an interview
with the BBC, Trevor Phillips does, however, mention Shakespeare, the loss of this literary icon as a loss particularly “bad for immigrants” (Race Chief Wants Integration Push, 3 Apr. 2004). It is this mention of a literary canon in this context that might be potentially problematic, because through this, the process of defining Britishness transcends the mere political realm and enters the cultural.

Edward Said elaborates the role of such literary canons in the process of cultural identity formation in the opening pages of his ground-breaking work *Culture and Imperialism* (1994). According to him, such canonical figures function as points of identification for building narratives of belonging to a group. Through examples of works of Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, both pillars of British literary history and more importantly points of identification for British cultural identity, he emphasizes how their narratives have sanctioned and legitimised imperialism. Closely associated with this sanctioning of imperialism is also the sanctioning of the notion of White superiority over other races.

At this point, it is important to probe if, and in what ways, this thought of racial and cultural superiority, the fundament of imperialist ideology, has perpetuated into post-imperial contemporary notions of Britishness.

### 2.1.1. Relics of Empire

The ideology that propelled colonialism or imperialism on the foundation of the radical hierarchisation of humans based on the colour of their skin is still evident in culture of the former centre of the British Empire today. The struggle against discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity has had a marked impact on this ideology, making it politically incorrect and therefore unacceptable. However, relics of the Empire are still to be found in everyday British life as tangible carriers of the ideology that led to subjugation of more than half the planet’s population for over 300 years.

Catherine Hall identifies a number of ways in which the Empire is still present in everyday life in contemporary Britain.

The buildings which offer material reminders of imperial connections, the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange symbolizing the financial centre of the globe, the reliefs of Africans’ heads with elephants on the façade of the Liverpool Exchange marking the significance of the slave trade to that city’s wealth, the great museums of London, packed with imperial treasures, the Hyderabad Barracks of Colchester reminding us of the links
between Britain and India, the West India Dock Company’s elegant building just by Canary Wharf, once the meeting place of slave traders and sugar merchants, now the site of refurbished flats for city folks. The streets of every town mark historic battles and moments, from Trafalgar to Mafeking, profoundly shaped by imperial expansion and danger. The novels which form national literature, from Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, an English country home financed by sugar plantations of Antigua, to Charles Dickens’s unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, touched with racial fear engendered by the ‘Indian Mutiny’ of 1857 when “natives” serving in the British Army rebelled against their colonial masters. The quintessential national beverage, tea imported from Ceylon and India, the demand for it changing the shape of whole regions as tea gardens were laid out, the sugar served with it which transformed the British Caribbean islands into a gigantic sugarmill, and changed the economy and society of Africa and the Caribbean forever (2001: 27-28).

Another example of this persisting presence of the Empire can be witnessed in the nomenclature of highly esteemed awards and titles like those of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). These awards, associated with national honour and pride, again embody, one may argue, the unwillingness to part from the past, a sense of nostalgia for the Empire, unpalatable to many from former colonies. Benjamin Zephania, the British Jamaican Rastafarian poet and writer, refused the OBE bestowed on him by the British crown on the grounds that it reminds him of “thousand of years of brutality - it reminds [him] of how [his] foremothers were raped and [his] forefathers brutalised” (27 Nov 2003).¹⁷

With such examples it is hard to deny that the Empire continues to be of great significance in British cultural life; many of its traditions have not yet been questioned and still persist leaving an indelible mark on how British cultural identity is defined.

Academics from various disciplines, from sociology to history, have offered a variety of reasons for this unwillingness to let go of the past. However, all have a certain aspect in common: declining power on the world stage leading to a glorification of a time in the past, when Britain was a key player in world politics. Stuart Ward suggests probing the reactions to decolonisation as a first step to understand the persistence of imperial ideology. In the introduction to the book *British Culture and the End of Empire* he summarises different outlooks provided by historians of the time towards the decolonisation process, calling it a “relatively benign issue in post-war culture” (2001: 2).

¹⁷ Hilary P. Damenber analyses Benjamin Zephania’s documentary *This OBE Is Not For Me* (BBC, 2007), which repeats the arguments made by Zephania here, in the context of multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain (2012: 75-90).
This ‘minimal impact’ thesis has been broadly shared by British cultural historians dealing with the post-1945 era, who have tended to interpret their subject through the multifaceted prism of the Cold War, the post-war consensus, austerity and affluence, the rise of welfarism, the demise of deference, ‘youth culture’, and angry young men who never had it so good as they swung into the sixties (Ward, 2001: 4).

Other perspectives on history have taken over, relegating the atrocities of the Empire to the margin in historical discourse, resulting in the fact that many contemporary white Britons may not be able to identify a single colony of the former British Empire. Ward argues that it is not so much a deep knowledge of the particulars of the Empire but an ‘imperial outlook’ that has persisted in the wider cultural and social spheres (2001: 4).

2.1.2. Nostalgia for ‘Greater’ Times

The process of decolonisation that started soon after Britain’s shared victory in the war over the Nazis led to a loss of power on the world stage. Britain’s supremacy as the largest and mightiest empire began to crumble in the face of American and the Soviet Union’s rise to become power blocks around which the rest of world was centred. Even though, as mentioned in the previous section, the effects of decolonisation on the social and cultural fabric of Britain were not considered monumental by contemporary historians who characterised the reaction of the general public as ‘indifference’, many writers from the 1960s onwards tried to analyse the present state of Britain, more often than not connecting the post-War state of “perceived malaise” to the loss of the international power that the Empire had provided (Ward, 2001: 9). Antony Sampson was a leading advocate of this idea of Britain’s disorientated state after World War II, who wrote in his book, Anatomy of Britain (1961):

A loss of dynamic and purpose, and a general bewilderment, are felt by many people, both at the top and the bottom in Britain today… It is hardly surprising that, in the twenty years since the war, Britain should have felt confused about her purpose- with those acres of red on the map dwindling, the mission of the war dissolving, and the whole imperial mythology of battleships, governors and generals gone for ever (as quoted in Ward, 2001: 8).

The loss of power was hard to swallow, prompting another writer, Michael Shanks, to note in his book, The Stagnant Society (1961):

What sort of an island do we want to be? ... A lotus island of easy, tolerant ways, bathed in the golden glow of an imperial sunset, shielded from discontent by a threadbare welfare state and an acceptance of genteel poverty? Or the tough dynamic race we have been in the
past, striving always to better ourselves, seeking newer worlds to conquer in place of those we have lost, ready to accept growing pains as the price of growth (as quoted in Ward, 2001: 10).

Both pieces of writing, tinged with a sense of nostalgia, make a connection between the loss of glory of the nation with the loss of the Empire. Though loss of colonies per se was not considered to affect Britain’s contemporary history, a nostalgia for a time when the Empire was still intact was very present.

Television, another significant discursive site, also offers an example of such nostalgia for the era when Britain’s role on the world stage had not yet been overshadowed by American and Soviet supremacies. The internationally popular television sitcoms Dad’s Army (BBC, 1968-77) and ´Allo ´Allo (BBC, 1984-92) may be considered symptomatic of this persisting nostalgia as they revisit the period of the Second World War and provide comic dramatizations of Britain’s role in the Allied victory over the Nazis (Dannenberg, 19 May 2010). Not just restricted to comic representations, the theme’s pervasiveness can be noted in other television genres. Colditz Story (BBC, 1972-73), a miniseries adapted from the novel of the same name, followed by Secret Army (BBC, 1977-79), Enemy At The Door (ITV, 1978-80), the romance We’ll Meet Again (ITV, 1982) are just a few examples of popular television dramas thematising the War. The trend continues even today as exemplified by the ITV’s detective series Foyle’s War (2002- present) set in Hastings in the period during and after the War. It is striking to note that the British Film Institute’s web-magazine, Screenonline, has a category World War II dramas. Though many of the dramas mentioned here show a critical approach to the period in question and do not simply glorify Britain’s role in the war, the sheer number of programmes set in the period highlights the significance of this event in the nation’s cultural memory, raising it to mythical proportions unparalleled by any other historical event.

Though not directly connected to Empire, this persistent and what some might call almost obsessive reiteration of World War II and the attached glorious victory of Britain, as exemplified through the cases above, has immense implications to understanding what may (still) define Britishness in the contemporary context of its multicultural reality (Gilroy, 2005: 88). Paul Gilroy argues:

I think there is something neurotic about Britain’s continued citation of the anti Nazi war. Making it a privileged point of entry into national identity and self understanding reveals a
desire to find a way back to the point where national culture – operating on a more manageable scale of community and social life - was, irrespective of the suffering involved in the conflict, both comprehensible and habitable. The memory of the country at war against foes who are simply, tidily, and uncomplicatedly evil, has recently acquired the status of an ethnic myth. It explains not only how the nation remade itself through war and victory but can also be understood as a rejection or deferral of its present problems. That process is driven by the need to get back to the place or moment before the country lost its moral and cultural bearings. Neither the appeal of homogeneity nor the antipathy towards immigrants and strangers who represent the involution of national culture can be separated from the underlying hunger for reorientation. Turning back in this direction is also a turning away from the perceived dangers of pluralism and from the irreversible fact of multiculture (Gilroy, 2005: 89 -90).

The repeated citation of the military victory over Nazi Germany has myriad connotations, which are directly or indirectly linked to the Empire. It is not the only war that has been fought and won by Britain in the last century. In fact, there have been other wars in more recent times, fought in the Suez, Malaya, Northern Ireland, The Falklands to name a few, which are not remembered with the same ardour and passion as the Second World War. The almost mythical significance this war has evoked in public imagination that links it to nationalism, is arguably the most significant factor with regard to the perpetuation of imperial ideology (Gilroy, 2005: 89). Directly it refers to a historical moment when Britain’s role on the world stage, with most of its Empire still intact in spite of growing nationalist movements in many of the colonised countries, was still of unquestionable significance. It was after this event that probably the Empire suffered its first great blow - the loss of ‘the jewel in the crown’, i.e., independence of India in 1947, followed by the decolonisation of Africa in the 50s and the 60s. On a more metaphorical level, the fiend in this war, Nazi Germany, was and still is considered the ultimate embodiment of all evil, and the Allied victory over it represented and continues to be represented simplistically as the epitome of the triumph of good over evil, a dichotomy based on the Manichean principle that governed colonial ideologies (Gilroy, 2005: 88-89).

Furthermore, this historic moment could also be cited as the last moment of relative racial and ethnic homogeneity of the mother country, as it was after the Second World War that the great waves of non-white immigration from the former colonies started, which would go on to effect the ethnic demographic make of Britain converting it into a multicultural and multi-ethnic nation in the years to come (Gilroy, 2005: 88).
2.1.3. ‘Postcolonial Melancholia’

As Paul Gilroy notes, the multiple levels on which the Empire is reiterated in British national consciousness elucidate the lack of a thorough re-working of colonial history and a lack of acceptance and inclusion of the multi-ethnic reality into national consciousness of the country today (2005).

When Paul Gilroy says “There ain’t no Black in the Union Jack” (1987) he means exactly this lack of engagement of national history with not just the consequences of colonialism, but this nostalgic perception of the past that reveals an unwillingness to accept the multi-ethnic, multicultural reality of contemporary Britain and work towards a non-racialised society.

Gilroy further explains the cause of this inability as a condition he calls ‘postcolonial melancholia’. Borrowing from the research done on West-German post-War psychological, social and political behaviour by psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, he describes this precarious, psychological condition of the British nation as a “melancholic reaction” (2005: 99) to a “loss of a fantasy of omnipotence” (as quoted in Gilroy, 2005: 99), a reaction sustained by the loss in esteem associated with the world’s largest and ‘greatest’ empire.

Before the British people can adjust to the horrors of their own modern history and start to build a new national identity from the debris of their broken narcissism, they will have to learn to appreciate the brutalities of colonial rule enacted in their name and to their benefit, to understand the damage it did to the political culture at home and abroad, to consider the extent of their country’s complex investments in ethnic absolutism that has sustained it. The multilayered trauma – economic and cultural as well as political and psychological – involved in accepting the loss of the empire would therefore be compounded by a number of additional shocks. Among them are the painful obligations to work through the grim details of imperial and colonial history and to transform paralyzing guilt into a more productive shame that would be conducive to the building of a multicultural nationality that is no longer phobic about the prospect of exposure to strangers or otherness (Gilroy, 2005: 99).

The reworking of history, implying moving past the melancholic nostalgia and learning to accept the nation’s violent past instead of forgetting the atrocities committed, has to come first, and only then can a new, more inclusive identity that celebrates difference be created. A coming to term of this kind requires that an acute awareness of the Empire and its brutalities are established in everyday discourses, where Britons are forced to confront these issues instead of shying away or denying their existence.
It is the dominance of this narrative of British identity even in contemporary times\(^\text{18}\) that forms the context for the struggles of British South Asians for recognition and equality and against discrimination and alienation that has been an integral part not just of their experience as an ethnic minority and diaspora, but also their representations in audio-visual media.

2.2. The Race Relations Discourse and the Development of the British South Asian Diaspora

To further contextualise British South Asian identities, the following section outlines major moments, beginning from the first arrival of people of South Asian origin, the discrimination and racism faced by them, to the active (and in cases militant) struggle against this and for equal rights till in the contemporary period. Decade by decade it elaborates events, experiences and legislation (that have been the cause for or have caused certain events and experiences) which have become an integral part of the cultural memory of the British South Asian diaspora and therefore also feature significantly in the representation of their identities over and over again. Lastly, it discusses the emergence of religion as a category of discrimination, and the implications of this has on the experience of British South Asians, many of whom are Muslims and form the majority of British Muslims.

2.2.1. Historiscising the Race Relations Discourse in Britain

“I think that the past is all that makes the present coherent, and the past will remain horrible for exactly as long as we refuse to access it honestly” (James Baldwin, as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 1).

The rule of Septmus Servus, the Roman emperor of North African origin, over Anglo-Saxons from 193 to 211 A.D. is often called the first significant contact between the English and coloured people. The Second (1189-91) and the Ninth Crusades (1271-2) of the Middle Ages were the next marked encounters, when the efforts to free the Holy City of Jerusalem from the Muslims failed. The next encounters were the result of marine voyages of explorers such as John Locke in the sixteenth century, who brought back West African slaves to be sold in England. The discovery of the New World and establishment of colonies there by Spain and Portugal prompted

\(^{18}\) The present British government led by David Cameron has appointed the historian Niall Ferguson, author of the controversial work *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (2001) who has been criticized for being “right-wing” and “euro-centric” to re-work the history curriculum for British schools (Vasagar, 9 July 2010). This question has also been raised by Hilary Dannenberg in her analysis of British media and nostalgia (19 May 2010).
England to do the same on the North American mainland and Barbados. 1655 marked the acquisition of Jamaica from Spain by Oliver Cromwell (Hiro, 1991: 2).

Though it was Vasco Da Gama, a Portuguese sailor, who first reached the Indian subcontinent via the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope after the failed attempt of Christopher Columbus, it was the British, driven by trading interests, who would finally take over many regions of the subcontinent. The initial interest in the culture of the subcontinent was replaced by a disdain for it, as military victories increased the level of confidence of the white rulers, leading to the development of an attitude that, by propagating the idea of racial superiority, justified colonisation. Charles Grant, a British historian, in 1792 described Indians as “a race of men lamentably degenerate and base, retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation … governed by a malevolent and licentious passion …” (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 5).

Furthermore, as noted by historians, terms used for colonised Indians were the same as those used for African slaves, which reflected how colonial ideology failed to distinguish between various peoples and their cultures, considering them a homogenous group, defined by their inferiority. Terms like ‘blacks’ and ‘niggers’ were as prevalent usages to describe South Asians as they were for African slaves (Hiro, 1991: 6).

The Mutiny of 1857, now known as the First War of Independence in India, a reaction prompted by racial discrimination against Indian soldiers that ultimately led to India coming under direct rule of the British crown, further intensified this racialised thinking to such an extent that a London newspaper described the raging anger of the British in India by noting: “Every nigger we meet [we] either string up or shoot” (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 6). *The Times* lucidly described the overwhelming notion of superiority of the British: “[the] most scrubby mean little representative of *la race blanche* … regards himself as infinitely superior to the Rajpoot with a genealogy of a thousand years” (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 6). The racial hierarchies were not just instrumental in justifying subjugation of the Colonised but functioned as a unifying element despite the heterogeneity of the British themselves. Seton Kerr, the foreign secretary to the government of Great Britain, put the conception of British superiority even more eloquently: “the cherished conviction of every Englishman in India, from the highest to the lowest … that he belongs to a race whom God has destined to govern and subdue” (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 6). Similar arguments were used to unify white Americans in the Civil War of 1861. The sheer
repetition of the same arguments all around the world as a justification for subjugation and domination gave them a sense of valid ‘truth’. While underlining the common shared ‘superior’ nature of the white races they further homogenised the colonised, racial Other, making the racial divide universally paramount (Hiro, 1991: 6-7).

The theory of evolution based on the principle of ‘survival of the fittest’ propounded by Charles Darwin in his book *Origin of Species*, first published in 1859, was used as scientific evidence to prove the ‘natural superiority’ of the white races over the coloured. Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief in India (1902-1909) noted:

> It is this consciousness of the inherent superiority of the Europeans which has won for us India … However well-educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank we can bestow on him would cause him to be considered an equal of the British officer (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 7).

The superiority of the white races, once ‘scientifically’ validated and established, gave rise to “a paternalistic concern for the ‘native’ child-figure” (Hiro, 1991: 7), reflected in the civilizing and educating mission of the Empire. It is in this vein that Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem *The White Man’s Burden* has been interpreted:

> Take up the White Man’s burden –
> Send forth the best you breed –
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives’s needs
> To wait in heavy harness,
> On fluttered folk and wild –
> Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

However, the movement was not just unidirectional – not only white Europeans, and white Britons among them, travelled to the colonies. 1875 saw the first significant arrival of coloured students, amongst them South Asians, to the mother country. The racial prejudice that governed the Empire was also prevalent at home. In spite of a university culture of education and tolerance, their presence was clearly unwelcome. 1913 marked the first significant step towards harmonising race relations in the colonial centre, with a special meeting for those interested in the welfare of colonial students (Hiro, 1991: 8).

The shortage of labour and raw materials that came with the First World War brought more coloured people to Britain. Trade ships with crews from the colonies, among them India,
were used by the Royal Navy to transport troops. The colonies also supplied labour for the ordnance factories and merchant ships, while white workers and seamen served in the war. However, as the war ended, many of these people were sent home and the few who remained in Britain settled in the port towns. These towns became centres for race riots as rising tensions resulted in violence (Hiro, 1991: 8). A newspaper from Cardiff reacted as follows:

The government ought to declare it to be a part of national policy that this country is not to be regarded as an emigration field, that no more immigrants (as distinguished from visitors) can be admitted – and immigrants must return to whence they came from. … This must apply to black men from the British West Indies as well as from the United States (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 8).

Another newspaper, The Spectator, also published a number of articles in 1920 exposing the colour bar in Britain, pointing out, in particular, the racist attitudes of white Britons who had been in the colonies when it came to housing and employment of coloured immigrants (Hiro, 1991: 8-9).

In spite of the challenges to start afresh in the mother country and resist its unwelcoming racist discriminatory practices, many individuals from the colonies continued to leave their home countries in the hope of a better future in the imperial centre.

Among the communities from the subcontinent, it was mostly Sikhs and Muslims who emigrated. Many had been in other British colonies in military capacities, and unlike the Hindus, their religion did not forbid them from travelling and settling abroad. Craftsmen and agriculturalists by profession, they were keen to explore the world for new opportunities. Many had migrated to the other parts of the British Empire like Fiji, the Caribbean and East Africa, where there were settlements of Indian labourers already. Many had also immigrated to Canada, before the Canadian Immigration Act of 1910, which restricted entry, had been passed. After the First World War, Britain remained the sole country that still had an ‘open-door’ policy towards immigrants from other parts of the Empire, in spite of the racist attitude of the general public. Mostly craftsmen from the subcontinent immigrated to Britain around this time, and only the few who could speak English got employment. The rest were left to look for other means of sustenance, often involving door-to-door peddling of goods like hosiery, woollens and knitwear (Hiro, 1991: 110-111).
Though there was a continuous flow of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent to Britain before the outbreak of the Second World War, the numbers were insignificant in comparison to the waves of immigration after the war; these waves of immigration resulted in the drastic change in the ethnic demography of Britain.

2.2.2. Aftermath of the Second World War: Immigration in the 1940s and 1950s

2.2.2.1. The Ideal of the Commonwealth

In comparison to the First World War, military troops from the colonies participated much more actively on the front in the Second World War. In order to attract soldiers, the image of Britain as the mother country was propagated in the colonies. The severe shortage of labour in the years after the wars through to the 50s led to a further emphasis on this image. The Labour government led by Clement Attelee passed the 1948 Nationality Act, according to which all the people living in the British Empire and the Old and New Commonwealth countries were considered British subjects and shared equal rights to live and work in Britain. In the light of independence movements in the colonies, prompted by Indian Independence in 1947, this Act seemed to still hold up the ideal of the Empire by underlining the unity of its heterogeneous residents. The fifties saw a continued strong belief in the ideal of the Commonwealth, with Britain taking on the role of the benevolent mother country, home to all who were or once had been part of the Empire. However, in the face of race riots on the island, the majority white population was left feeling critical of coloured immigration. In fact, a survey conducted showed that 75 percent of Britons wanted coloured immigration controlled. As a result, the gulf between the Home and External Affairs branches of the government widened. In 1958 this gap was clearly visible in debate surrounding the motion, put forward by Sir Cyril Osborne, that demanded curbing coloured immigration. In spite of support from both individual members of the Labour and the Conservative party, the motion was defeated, and the Conservative government continued with the so called ‘Open Door Policy’. The topic had become so heavily debated that both parties decided to keep it silent in their respective campaigns for the next general elections (Hiro, 1991: 201-202).
2.2.2.2. South Asian Immigration to Britain: Motivations and Challenges

In the (late) 1950s, South Asians already in Britain had success, as they found work. Even the former door-to-door pedlars now found steady work with weekly wages. Their success attracted others from the subcontinent, who, though they were supposed to experience the joys of independence, were torn from their land as a result of partition of British India to form India and Pakistan, and faced the immense trauma of the violence that accompanied it. The mass migration of almost four million Muslims from India to Pakistan and an even larger number of Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan to India led not only to a rapid increase in the population of towns like Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur in Punjab, but also an increasing pressure on land in rural areas. For these migrants who had already been uprooted from their homes and were now battling to find a means of livelihood, the economic attractions of Britain were hard to resist. Friends and relatives who were living in Britain communicated the chance at a successful life offered there by the post-War boom and many were enticed to leave their homeland. The border conflict of 1948 between India and Pakistan further added to these numbers (Hiro, 1991: 111).

In spite of these upheavals and the motivation to leave the homeland, the numbers of Indians and Pakistanis who migrated to Britain remained relatively low. For instance, in 1955 the combined numbers of migrants from the subcontinent was about 7350, one-fourth the number of immigrants from the West Indies. Most of them were from the conflict-torn regions of Punjab, Gujrat, Mirpur and Sylhet. The economic crunch of 1958 further reduced the numbers and statistics reveal only 3800 immigrants from the subcontinent to Britain in 1959 (Hiro, 1991: 112-113).

Unlike its West Indian counterpart, the significant motivation behind the sub-continental immigration to the former colonial centre was financial. Whereas the Caribbean population felt a socio-cultural pull towards the mother country, the much stricter maintenance of racial apartheid during the period of colonialism in India left little feeling of a shared common history and culture for those from the subcontinent. Britain remained a socially and culturally distinct land, generating either feelings of awe or disdain in the minds of most people in the sub-continent (Hiro, 1991: 113). Most of those who ventured to migrate to this strange land were, in fact, only motivated by economic reasons or wanted to join their families who had migrated previously. In addition, restrictions were placed both by Indian as well as Pakistani governments on emigration.
by curtailing the numbers of passports issued and increasing the financial and educational requirements of those who wanted to leave the country (Hiro, 1991: 114).

Those who did migrate did not receive a warm welcome in Britain. The arrival of the ‘SS Empire Windrush’ on British shores from the West Indies carrying immigrants had already posed the question: ‘Who is a British citizen?’ The predominantly white population was not willing to accept huge numbers of coloured immigrants from former colonies, South Asians among them, and the strong racial prejudice was reflected in the imposition of the ‘colour bar’, keeping social and cultural interaction between the races strictly minimal. Discrimination in areas like housing and employment led to ghettoisation of Black and South Asian British communities (Cloake, Tudor, 2001: 36-41). Racial tensions grew and erupted in many successive riots such as the Liverpool riots of 1948, White riots in Camden in 1954, and those in Nottingham and North Kensington Hill in 1958. The violence in these riots was directed chiefly against the African-Caribbean community, and many Asians did not feel affected by these events. A common shared ‘Black’ consciousness, which was to form the crux of the movement against racism, had not yet developed. The racism that both these major communities faced were on different grounds. Paul Gilroy explains this phenomenon: “[West Indians] may not be as different or as foreign as Asians who are, by comparison, handicapped by the strength and resilience of their culture ... Where West Indian culture is weak, Asian communities suffer from a surfeit of culture which is too strong” (as quoted in: Malik, 2002: 14). What, however, was common, as Malik puts it, was “a strong sense of determination to make their lives in Britain as comfortable and successful as quickly as possible, to work hard and invest in education” (2002: 14).

Prevalent racist ideologies also gave rise to fascist organisations like the White Defence League, the British National Party and the League of Empire Loyalists. The perception of the general public towards the rise of such groups, however, tended towards a fear of rise of hooliganism rather than an outright critique of the blatant racist ideology that formed the fundament of their activities (Malik, 2002: 13). This provided the impetus for activism against racism. Organisations like ‘Keep Britain Tolerant’ and the ‘Association for Advancement of Coloured People’ were set up (Malik, 2002: 13).
Despite this, the 1950s saw a continuation of the general public’s oblivious attitude towards racism, especially institutional racism. Though the police force, who supported the policies of the Conservative government in power from 1951-55, were outright racist, few in the government took notice of it, proclaiming that all necessary steps were being taken to curb discriminatory behaviour, and that the racial tensions that constantly erupted in violent riots were temporary and would come to an end once things settled (Malik, 2001: 14).

2.2.3. The 60s
The 1960s saw a number of events that left a lasting impact on coloured immigration and the ensuing race relations discourse in Britain. For British South Asians in particular, the decade saw a remarkable development with regard to employment.

2.2.3.1. Legislation on Coloured Immigration and Race Relations: Institutional Racism
On the subcontinent, in both India and Pakistan, the strict restrictions enforced by emigration laws in the previous decades were made more flexible. In addition, there were rumours that Commonwealth Immigration Laws were soon to be changed in order to contain migration. As a consequence, the first few years of the 60s saw an abrupt increase in immigrants from the subcontinent. Statistics reveal a remarkable rise in numbers, from 4800 Pakistani and Indian immigrants in 1960 to 48,850 in the following year. The first half of 1962 also showed an equal number of immigrants (Hiro, 1991: 114). The same year saw the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, which specifically curtailed the number of coloured people entering the United Kingdom, however allowing immigration from the White Commonwealth countries (Hartmann, Husband, 1974: 11). The Act revised the definition of British citizenship as had been determined by the British Nationality Act of 1948. It changed its terms for coloured immigrants from former colonies while exempting: “(1) those born in the UK, (2) those holding UK passports issued by the UK government, and (3) those included on the passport of a person exempt from immigration control under (1) or (2)” (Layton-Henry, 1992: 75). Those who held passports from other Commonwealth Nations had to undergo immigration control. Furthermore, this Act introduced a system of vouchers for prospective immigrants, divided in categories A, B and C.

*Category A* vouchers were issued to those who had a specific job to go to. *Category B* vouchers were available to those with specific, recognised skills or qualifications which
were in short supply. *Category C* vouchers, in deliberately limited numbers, were issued on a ‘first come first served’ basis to those who did not meet the criteria for the other categories (Mason, 1995: 28; italics in original).

The Labour Party opposed the bill on the grounds that it was racially prejudiced and had not been a product of consultation with other Commonwealth governments (Hansen, 2000: 112). They, however, had to rethink their position on the subject soon enough, in order to appease their voters for the next general election. The party’s manifesto revealed a revised outlook on this matter stating: “Labour accepts that the number of immigrants entering the United Kingdom must be limited. Until a satisfactory agreement covering this can be negotiated with the Commonwealth, a Labour government will retain immigration control” (as quoted in: Hiro, 1991: 205).

Furthermore, the passing of the 1962 Act led many South Asian settlers who had initially planned to go back after spending a couple of years in Britain to stay longer. In addition to the Act, the economic recession of 1962-63 proved to be another factor playing a role in the reduction in the rate of immigration (Hiro, 1991: 114).

The decade also saw, with the election of the Labour Party in 1964, the passing of the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968 in an effort to encourage positive race relations in the UK. The Act of 1965, put forward by Frank Soskice, was the first legislative action to reduce racial discrimination; however, in order to appease the Conservative Party, the originally planned criminal sanctions placed on racist activities had to be recalled (Hansen, 2000: 144). According to Layton-Henry, “[t]he 1965 Race Relations Act was thus declaratory rather than effective or efficient. The major emphasis of the Bill was on conciliation rather than on criminal sanctions: it urged people to do what was right without penalizing them for doing what was unfair and unjust” (1992: 50).

A Race Relations Board was also established in the same year, in order to work towards this cause (Solomos, 1993: 84). Roy Jenkins, who followed, Soskice, as Home Secretary later in 1965, and who continued at this post after the subsequent general elections, had planned to make the Race Relations Act more effective by extending it to include particular areas where discrimination had been most radical, like housing and employment and by also imposing criminal sanctions. However, in the light of the events that followed, like the Kenyan Asian
Crisis, these efforts were of no avail. Jenkins was replaced by James Callaghan, and the aspect of controlling the new wave of immigration took priority (Layton-Henry, 1992: 50-51).

As Kenya gained independence in 1963, the South Asians, who had settled there, were put under pressure to choose local or UK citizenship. The majority opted to hold on to their status as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies in the face of hostility from the Kenyan Africans, and sought refuge in the UK (Hansen, 2000: 158-161). Many would have faced immigration control, had their passports been issued by the colonial authority in Kenya prior to 1962 in accordance with the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act. However, this was not the case, and as many Kenyan Asians were not granted Kenyan citizenship, they applied for British passports, which were issued after 1963 by the authority of the High Commissioner, who was a direct representative of the British government (Hansen, 2000: 171). The fear of large number of South Asians from Kenya looking for refuge in the UK was looming; in fact it was believed that 2000 South Asians were leaving Kenya for Britain monthly in 1967 (Hansen, 2000: 160). In 1968, another Commonwealth Immigration Act was passed “which placed a ceiling on the entry of 1,500 workers per annum for this type of immigrant, and also imposed further restrictions on the rights of entry of dependants of immigrants” (Hartmann, Husband, 1974: 11). Entry and right to settlement in the UK to white British passport holders, however, was not denied, on the basis that they had family connections in the UK. Therefore the Act established restrictions on rights on the basis of skin colour (Moore, 1975: 32-34).

In comparison to the 1962 Act, the 1968 Act was much more controversial. “The earlier law curtailed the rights of Commonwealth citizens; but then the British Commonwealth was not a national or a supra-national entity. As for the 1968 Act, it curtailed rights implicit in a document issued by the British government” (Hiro, 1991: 215). This document was the British passport. According to the International Commission of Jurists, the Act was in contradiction to the declaration of human rights (Hiro, 1991: 215). The Commonwealth Immigration Acts serve as examples of what has come to be known as institutional racism as they barred entry to the UK on the basis of skin colour.

In the same year a new Race Relations Act was also passed, which, according to Anthony Lester, “extended the scope of law [but], still contained unnecessary exceptions and there were
serious deficiencies in its enforcement provisions” (1998: 24). A Community Relations Commission was also set up to further encourage positive race relations (Lester, 1998: 24).

The decade also saw important public figures known for being openly racist. 1964 marked the use of racist ideology as an instrument to gain votes; Peter Griffiths, a candidate from the Conservative Party fought the General Elections on a blatantly racist campaign (Malik 2002: 14).

The most infamous of these figures was Enoch Powell, the Conservative Minister of Health from 1960 to 1963. He was vehemently opposed to immigration, and continued to voice his opposition publicly even in the mid 60s. In 1968, around the time of the Kenyan Asian crisis, as the Parliament debated the new bill against racism, Powell made his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, which described the terrible consequences of immigration.

We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation, to be permitting an annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre (as quoted in: Hartmann, Husband, 1974: 18, 19).

For him, the only solution to the problem was repatriation (Solomos, 1993: 67).

Powell’s speech was followed by a significant rise in racially motivated violence against immigrants, often provoked by extremist groups like the National Front (NF) and later the British National Party (BNP) (Cloake, Tudor, 2001: 50-51). To counteract institutional racism, new organisations like the ‘International African Service Bureau’, ‘Pakistani Workers’ Association’ and the ‘Committee against Racial Discrimination’ were established (Malik, 2002: 15).

2.2.3.2. The Economic Growth of South Asian Communities in the 60s

In response to the discrimination and racism they faced in their new homes, a rising sense of community solidarity developed among the early South Asian immigrants. The marked cultural difference and inability to speak English further contributed to their feeling of alienation from the majority white culture. This solidarity, stemming from an agrarian culture of “mutual obligation towards kinsmen and fellow villagers” (Hiro, 1991: 116), extended to migrants arriving later, and helping them to find their feet in the UK was a responsibility that experienced South Asians gladly took on. Those who could speak English took on roles of interpreters and
translators for others who did not and helped them overcome communication barriers in the new home.\(^\text{19}\) The fact that many could not speak the language had far reaching consequences on the individual as well as at the community level. The choice of jobs being restricted heavily by this factor, most ended up working in situations where communication requirements were minimal. Industry, in particular heavy engineering and textiles in the North and the Midlands, offered such jobs. Bradford, for instance, with its woollen textile industry, had employed approximately 3500 Pakistanis in the year 1961. The area of Greater London, however, still remained unfavourable to South Asian immigrants because of the scarcity of such employment. In comparison to sixty percent of the all immigrants from the Caribbean being employed in this region, the number of the Asians there was considerably low in 1966 (Hiro, 1991: 117-118).

In addition, the cost of living in large cities like London was much higher. Most had borrowed in their homeland, to afford the passage. Paying off these debts and simultaneously also providing for the family left behind in the home country were top priorities, in addition were concerns about saving enough to buy a house in the new land. In comparison to the average Briton who saved five percent of his earnings, the average South Asian immigrant saved nearly 50 percent. Their motivation to earn and save more could be seen in their readiness to work overtime and their indifference to social and cultural events in Britain. According to the research done by scholar Rashmi Desai in 1958, the fact that the colour bar existed in dance halls and pubs was of little consequence to South Asian migrants, as they did not indulge in such recreational activities, considering them unnecessary expenditure. It was therefore not entirely unexpected that the PEP (Political and Economic Planning) survey of 1966 found that Pakistanis in Keighley were the last to complain about racial discrimination (Hiro, 1991: 19).

Dilip Hiro summarises:

By creating a self-contained life of their own, and by being genuinely indifferent to British social life, many Asians spared themselves the indignities and rebuffs inflicted on the West Indians. Their expectations from British life, outside employment, were minimal; their attempts to socialize with white people almost non-existent. Consequently, racial tensions in cities like Bradford, where Asians formed the bulk of the coloured settlers, was much less than in, say, Brixton, London, where West Indians were the predominant group (1991: 119).

\(^{19}\) The film *Yasmin* (2004), discussed in chapter three, depicts this aspect in its narrative, where protagonist Yasmin takes on the role of a translator between other members of the community and the bureaucracy.
However, this was not applicable to all immigrants from South Asia. Those who were well-versed in English and held educational qualifications, unlike their agriculturist counterparts, most obviously faced discrimination while looking for jobs. “A typical experience was that of an Indian teacher in London who made nearly 300 applications but did not obtain a single interview. [...] A holder of MA and LLB degrees from the Punjab became a moulder in a rubber factory in Southall; a police superintendent from Delhi, a machine operator” (Hiro, 1991: 119). The level of underemployment was drastically high at 84 percent for university graduates, as a survey conducted in 1966 revealed. The B voucher issuing system, which allowed entry of skilled professionals like teachers, doctors and scientists into the UK proved to be of no avail in helping them find jobs suited to their qualifications, as for British employers these vouchers were meaningless. Those South Asians who had attended British school and had obtained university degrees did not fare much better (Hiro, 1991:119). The poet and writer Zulfikar Ghose, who went to a British school and university, describes his personal experience in his autobiography.

I wrote to some daily papers ... two put me on their availability lists. To this day, I have heard nothing from them ... I wrote off to some advertising agencies. Some interviewed me and felt that my background in journalism and poetry was an excellent one for being a copywriter ... I have heard nothing more ... I wrote to several headmasters who advertised for teachers. Not one replied (as quoted in: Hiro, 1991: 119-120).

Faced with such dire circumstances, it was hardly surprising that many immigrants started their own small businesses. The small-scale mortgage clubs were among the first entrepreneurial ventures, which, in time, allowed club members who were investors to purchase their own houses. Grocery shops, catering to the needs South Asian communities specifically, were another. As the communities grew larger the businesses expanded, providing employment opportunities to others from the community. Many also started catering to the tastes of other immigrant communities. In Southall, for instance, there were more than thirty South Asian butchers and grocers serving a clientele of 15,000 members of the community (Hiro, 1991: 120-121).

Another area of business that South Asians ventured into was clothing. Initially serving mostly others from the subcontinent, many became drapers and tailors, the latter operating small-scale businesses from home. The very successful garment industry of London’s East End is a prime example, run mostly through outsourcing to South Asian housewives, thereby reducing
production costs and using untapped skills. Here the customers were, however, the white majority. This also held true in the small yet profitable restaurant businesses run by many Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis. Like other ventures, the restaurant offered chances of employment to others from the community. Travel agencies were another branch where immigrants from the subcontinent made their mark, selling cheap flights to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The 60s also saw a rise of estate agencies owned by South Asian immigrants, making it easier for other ethnic minorities to purchase and rent houses, who would have faced discrimination had they gone to white estate agencies. Setting up possibilities to finance these purchases, in the form of mortgage companies and brokers, went hand in hand (Hiro, 1991: 122-123).

Another area that attracted South Asian entrepreneurs was the press. The lack of knowledge of the English language reduced the accessibility of newspapers and journals for many immigrants from the subcontinent. In addition, many wanted a detailed account of the current events of their homeland to which their connection was still very strong. The gap in the market was seen by a journalist of Pakistani origin in Birmingham who launched the first Urdu weekly journal called *Mashriq* in 1961. Its success was remarkable and soon there were a number of publications in other languages including Hindi, Gujarati and Bengali, that carried both local as well as international news with special focus on the subcontinent. Most South Asian grocers functioned as distributors for such publications (Hiro, 1991: 124).

As illustrated through the examples above, most of the business ventures taken up by South Asians living in Britain relied heavily on the community. Understanding the specific cultural and social needs of the minority community, and catering to it, the businesses were successful in not just financial terms but also as pillars that bound the community together.

2.2.4. The 70s

The beginning of the decade saw another general election. In spite of being on a Conservative ticket, Powell’s continued to express his rampant views on coloured immigration in his campaign, which seemed to have become a cause of great concern to other members of the Party. Tony Benn, a Labour candidate, charged him with “raising the flag of racialism over Wolverhampton – a flag which was beginning to look suspiciously like the one that fluttered
over Dachau and Belsen” (as quoted in: Layton-Henry, 1992: 83). However, the Conservatives won the election, and soon Powell, recognising his fragile position in the Party, quit it to join the Ulster Unionists. Though his campaign had succeeded in alienating him from the Tories, his ideas on race and immigration did find their way into the further legislative actions taken to control immigration in the 70s (Layton-Henry, 1992: 84-85).

2.2.4.1. Further Legislation in Areas of Immigration and Race Relations
The Conservative Party’s reign brought another Immigration Act in 1971. This Act divided the Commonwealth citizens into ‘partials’ and ‘non-partials’. ‘Partials’ were those who were direct descendants of people born in the UK and could come and settle in Britain. In actual effect, ‘partials’ were citizens of the white Commonwealth countries. The ‘non-partials’, on the other hand, were required to have a work permit which needed to be renewed at specific time intervals, to be able to live in Britain. Their status was now closer to those of the aliens (Hartmann, Husband, 1974: 12-13). This Act was supposed to have put an “end to the immigration debate” (Layton-Henry, 1992: 86).

However, the 1972 Ugandan Asian crisis brought the matter back into the political and public arena. When in August 1972 General Idi Amin declared that all Ugandan Asians must leave the country immediately, over 50,000 people were rendered homeless. Most Ugandan Asians had British passports, and Britain was a natural choice for refuge. The crisis aroused much controversy with many politicians advocating refusal of immigration rights to these people. Groups like ‘The Monday Club’, a right-wing branch of the Conservative Party, and the National Front campaigned against accepting the refugees; however, the cabinet led by Edward Heath came to a different decision and established the Ugandan Resettlement Board and allowed the immigration of 27,000 Ugandan Asians (Layton-Henry, 1992: 86-87).

New legislation on race relations came later in the decade as a response to growing racism and the ineffectiveness of the race relation legislation of the previous decade. The latter, in particular, was documented in an extensive report from the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, The Organisation of Race Relations Administration, in 1975. The limitations of previous acts were spelt out and suggestions were included to recognise “institutionalised and unintended forms of discrimination [and], strengthen the administrative
and legal powers of the Race Relations Board in order to allow for a more effective implementation of anti-discrimination policies, including penalties for those found guilty of discrimination” (Solomos, 1993: 85-86). The report also called for a more active participation on the part of the central government, specifically the Home Office in the matter of race relations. The irrefutable evidence in this report and other such reports had a substantial impact, as witnessed in the 1975 White Paper on racial discrimination (Solomos, 1993: 86).

The new Race Relations Act that was passed in 1976 introduced new strategies to combat racism more effectively. The most significant of these were:

(a) an extension of the law to cover not only intentional racism but racial disadvantage brought about by systemic racism, (b) reorganisation of the Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Commission into a joint agency, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and (c) a different procedure for the handling of individual complaints about discrimination, which in the case of employment cases, were to be handled directly by the industrial tribunals rather than processed through the CRE (Solomos, 1993: 87).

However, this Act did not produce the radical change in race relations in Britain that had been expected of it. Instead its effectiveness was low as key root causes of racial discrimination had not been tackled, and the infrastructure to investigate and process individual complaints as well as more general discriminatory behaviour in areas of housing and employment was insufficient (Solomos, 1993: 89-90).

2.2.4.2. Rise of British South Asian Activism against Racism

For the British South Asian community, in particular, this decade marked a period of change. Firstly, the wives and the families of the predominantly male immigrants from the subcontinent in the 50s and the 60s began to arrive (Malik, 2002: 15). The second important factor was the arrival of a different class of Asians, the East African Asians who were “more anglicized and self assured than the immigrants from the subcontinent” (Hiro, 1991: 164). The third factor was the increased violence at the hands of white racists as reflected in the scandalous murders of two South Asian immigrants in the latter half of the decade. In the face of such events the entire community was forced to rethink its identity, and a move towards a radical change in position of the community within British social and cultural life was in order. The British South Asian
youth, subjected to two almost diametrically opposing worldviews, were the most affected group, and spearheaded the shift (Hiro, 1991: 164).

The younger generation of British South Asians had to resolve the dilemma posed by their traditional roles as community members with their own aspirations of identity fostered by a British education. They grew up in close-knit families where each individual was expected to play a certain role and be a part of the support system for the others. The degree to which British South Asian youth was emotionally dependent on other members of his/her family was much greater than that felt by an average white British person of the same age. In addition, was the fear of the complete ostracism from not just the family but also the community that an individual would face if he or she chose to break away. In contrast to this, the ethos at school was the growth of a free individual. Torn between these two worlds, that of home nested in the community on the one hand, and of school on the other, the dilemma often resulted in rebellion at home. However, many chose to side with their cultural roots, proudly upholding them when taunted by white contemporaries. They recognised that their South Asian heritage was an integral part of their hybrid identity and did not just protect it but flaunted it in the face of racial provocation. Their understanding of the subcontinent was very different from that displayed by their parents. “The youngsters thought and spoke in general terms of the Indian subcontinent – as a geographical area and a civilizational entity – whereas their parents defined themselves in specific regional, religious and caste terms” (Hiro, 1991: 165).

A similar attitude was also displayed by the East African Asians, who played pioneering roles in the three most well-known cases of action taken by British South Asian factory workers during the 70s – events at the Mansfield Hosiery Mills in Loughborough, Imperial Typewriters in Leicester, and the Grunwick Processing Laboratories in London. The racist treatment of the workers by the owners and management was the basic cause of the strikes in all three instances. In comparison to white workers, workers of South Asian descent were expected to put in longer hours, with lower wages to meet higher targets set for them in the first two cases. The outcome of the first was in the favour of the workers, whereas in the second case the company won the battle. The respective trade unions, however, refused to support the British South Asian workers’ causes (Moore, 1975: 73-85; Hiro, 1991: 166-167).
In the third, the Grunwick Processing Laboratories case, almost 80 percent of the four hundred workers were Gujrati-speaking East African Asians. When their newly formed union, Association of Professional, Executive and Computer Staff (APEX) was not recognised by the company’s management in August 1976, a strike was launched. At the following trials at the High Court, results of surveys conducted by the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) on behalf of the strikers were presented. These however did not satisfy the union members, leading eventually to the large-scale picketing a year later. Other local trade unions joined this massive action where the police used violence against the strikers. No resolution was reached till later that year, when the ACAS decided to withdraw its support and hence no longer recognised British South Asian workers’ membership to the APEX. The interesting aspect in this dispute, however, was that the owner of the company was himself an Anglo-Indian supported by the Conservative Party. Despite this, the strike had been organised and racial differences seemed to be overridden by class-based hierarchies. The extensive media coverage the incident received helped in diluting the stereotype of South Asian immigrants as willing to work under bad conditions for little money. Moreover, it signified an integration of sorts of the British South Asians into the social system, and the coming together of local trade unionists to support the cause of an ethnic minority was an unprecedented event reflecting solidarity across the different ethnic groups (Hiro, 1991: 167-168).

In the East End of London, racial tensions were on the rise during the 70s. This area of the capital was densely populated by immigrants from the subcontinent, and the presence of groups such as the National Front (NF) was felt increasingly. Racist graffiti and distribution of pamphlets propagating racist ideology increased and instances of verbal and physical assaults rose. A similar situation was to be seen in the western part of London, where the murder of a Sikh youth, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, on the 4th of June 1976 in Southall by white hooligans was applauded by the National Front. This incident shook the consciousness of the British South Asian community, their optimism in the better future of race relations giving way to drastic measures to protect themselves from the increasing violence. Though older organisations like the National Association of Asian Youth, which had been moderate in their communal welfare actions, continued to exist, the newer groups like Southall Youth Movement were more radical. In the East End, where a number of Bangladeshi immigrants resided, formerly separate
organisations cooperated to form the Anti-Racist Committee of Asians in East London. The objectives of such groups included the organisation of self-defence patrols and spreading awareness on the subject of racially motivated violence by organising demonstrations. Though this action led to a decline in violence for a short period of time, racist attacks on British South Asians soon returned with new fervour. New organisations like Action Committee Against Racial Attacks were set up. May 1978 saw the murder of a Bangladeshi immigrant, Atab Ali, under similar circumstances to the Southall murder, which led to an escalating chain of protests and demonstrations, illustrating the extent of the racial tensions in the area. The funeral march organised for Atab Ali, which ended at 10 Downing Street was attended by as many as 7000 Bangladeshi immigrants. In response to this, in June 1978 around 200 NF party workers vented their fury by destroying several South Asian establishments in Brick Lane. The following Sunday saw a large demonstration of 4000 people organised by the Anti-Nazi League, which was a collaborative effort of the anti-fascist, anti-racist moderate as well as radical leftist White Britons, in response to the growing propaganda of the NF at institutions like schools, trade unions and churches. In the same month further tensions erupted into violence and the police was called in. Among those arrested, fifty belonged to the anti-racist group whereas only ten to the NF. August 1978 saw a number of demonstrations of the same nature organised by both sides, and led to the establishment of a successful road block on Brick Lane by the anti-racist groups, forcing the NF demonstration to take other routes and avoiding this area (Hiro, 1992: 168-171; Layton-Henry: 1992: 139).

Important, however, in this struggle was the active role played by white anti-racist groups, which caused many British South Asians to recognise that not all whites were prejudiced. Further, this struggle motivated many British South Asian youngsters to join leftist organisations due to a newfound solidarity based on anti-racist, anti-fascist principles. Tensions and violence, however, continued to plague the area with the rise of neo-fascist groups, but a number of new organisations run by the mobilised and politically conscious younger generation of the British South Asian diaspora, aiming to overcome these tensions, also grew significantly. A growing gap was created, in the process, between the older organisations of the Asian community like the Indian Workers’ Association, the Pakistani Welfare Association and the Bangladeshi Welfare Association and newer groups like the Bengali Housing Action Group,
Bengali Youth League and the previously mentioned Southall Youth Movement. The latter were more critical of the former’s more liberal ideas, considering them a bourgeois initiative. In contrast to the older generation and their organisations, generally comprising of middle class members from business and intellectual backgrounds, the young leaders of newer groups belonged largely to the working classes. They were born in Britain, unlike their parents, and had a different relationship to this country than their parents (Hiro, 1991: 168-172).

On a national level, the latter half of the decade saw the introduction of several policies to improve strained race relations, and the principle of multiculturalism, the acknowledgement of different cultures and the differences between them, was on the political agenda. This version of multiculturalism, however, was criticised by many anti-racists as promoting white supremacy in the guise of tolerance. 1979 witnessed Margaret Thatcher’s election, which brought about a revival of nationalistic sentiments that excluded the ethnic minorities, echoing the ideology that Enoch Powell had made popular a decade ago with his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, and was comparable to what the U.S.A. would see under the leadership of Ronald Reagan (Malik, 2002: 17).

Race riots continued throughout this period. 1979 saw another violent incident that created national uproar. In preparation for the General Election, the NF launched a campaign calling for ethnic and racial ‘purity’ of the nation. A public meeting was held in Southall as part of this campaign. In response, over 5000 anti-racists belonging to both the British South Asian community as well as the Anti-Nazi League collected here the day before, but were to become the victims of violent police action, who were supposed to contain the NF public meeting. Nearly 700 people were arrested, of which 342 were of South Asian descent, and a member of the Anti-Nazi League, Blair Peach was killed. The brutality of the incident was condemned by all the groups, who put aside their ideological differences and demanded a thorough investigation into the murder. The authorities, however, could not find the actual culprits (Hiro, 1991: 172-173; Malik, 2002: 17; Layton-Henry, 1992: 95-96). The racist actions of the police over the years did not go unnoticed and were documented by the Institute of Race Relations in their 1979 report to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure called *Police Against Black People* (Malik, 2002: 17).
2.2.5. The 80s

The several Immigration Acts passed in the preceding years had already made discussion about British citizenship a hot topic in the 70s. The 1948 British Nationality Act that had proclaimed that all citizens of the Old and New Commonwealth Countries were British subjects and had rights to settle in the UK was no longer valid. As elaborated in the previous sections, the legislation to control immigration had been accused of being racist, banning or allowing entry into the country on grounds of skin colour. The pressure to redefine British nationality intensified, as governments realised “the need to rationalize and legitimize the immigration laws” (Layton-Henry, 1992: 190).

2.2.5.1. Redefining British Nationality with Margaret Thatcher

By the time Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, a legislative reworking of British nationality was clearly on the agenda, as the number of immigrants, this time from Hong Kong, grew. Echoing the contradictions between the definition of British nationality as set by the previously mentioned legislation and immigration laws, the Conservative Party policy of 1980 declared: “Future immigration policies if they are to be sensible, realistic and fair, must be founded on a separate citizenship of the UK and it is therefore essential that a reformed law of nationality should, for the first time, make clear who are the citizens of the UK” (as cited in Layton-Henry, 1992: 191). Later in the same year a White Paper was published, which categorised citizenship as either British citizenship, or British Dependant Territories citizenship or British Overseas citizenship. The bill also proposed restrictions on the rights of children of expatriates and those of immigrants in the UK. With little opposition and some amendments\(^\text{20}\) the bill was approved and came to be known as the 1981 British Nationality Act (Layton-Henry, 1992: 191-194). As a result of the restrictive measures that this Act implied on British citizenship, many permanently settled immigrants felt unsure of their status and applied to acquire citizenship. Though Thatcher’s government concentrated on various aspects of race relations and immigration, the major tasks the government set itself were the tightening of immigration controls and revising the British Nationality Act (Layton-Henry, 1992: 210).

\(^{20}\) The amendments made reduced the difference in rights of people who were born as British citizens and those who had acquired British citizenship and was approved of widely in the Commonwealth, but at the same time, was criticized by the right wing members like Ivor Stanbrook, of the Conservative Party (Layton-Henry, 1992: 193-194).
On the race relations front, the Conservative response to the riots and racially motivated violence that plagued the 80s was very different from that of previous governments. Considering it a problem of social order and lack of effective law enforcement, the solutions enforced by the government through most of its policies almost ignored the issue of race and emphasized the need to effectively maintain law and order, through improving methods of policing and training police personnel to effectively combat riot situations. Though some efforts were made to improve the race situation in the inner-city areas, especially when it came to the issue of unemployment, these failed to be as effective as promised by the government, and critics considered them to be mere symbolic gestures (Solomos, 1993: 178).

2.2.5.2. Racial Tensions and the United Front of ‘Black Britons’
As racial tensions continued in areas where large number of British South Asians lived, the action against harassment took on a new dimension. In the London suburb of Southall, for instance, the incidents of the previous decade had already induced the formation of radical groups like the Southall Youth Movement (SYM). In 1981, another riot flared in this area, when more than 300 skinheads from East End arrived to attend a concert organised at the local pub, Hamborough Tavern. The situation was a huge provocation to the large neighbouring South Asian community, who retaliated by throwing petrol bombs and setting the pub on fire. The rioting members of the community, however, did not just target the skinheads, but also the police and civilians present. Records show that 61 policemen and 70 civilians sustained injuries. The same day riots broke out in another part of Britain, in Toxteth, Liverpool which, unlike Southall, was a working class neighbourhood, where rates of unemployment and crime were high. The common aspect of these riots was that the police were also under attack, a result, probably, of the growing frustration with the racist attitudes that were deeply entrenched in this institution. Another important development in the events in Southall was the support that the most active and militant group, SYM, now had from other older organisations, whereas in previous years they had not been able to see eye to eye. The activism of the group, though militant at times, was at the grassroots level, advocating, in particular, self-defence when under attack. Their now popular image as a voluntary organisation combating racism increased their chances of receiving funds from larger organisations like the Commission for Racial Equality and the Greater London
Council. The financial resources opened up new avenues for expansion, but at the same time fostered corruption (Hiro, 1991: 174-175).

Like the SYM of Southall, many local organisations had been formed in the past decade all over the UK in cities and towns that had a substantial British South Asian population. Noteworthy among these was the Asian Youth Movement (AYM), formed in Bradford in 1977. They, like their counterparts in London, organised anti-racist, anti-fascist campaigns at the local level. In early 1981 the AYM of Bradford managed finally to receive funding from the state to promote their campaigns. However, soon after this its leaders, Tarlochan Gata-Aura and Tariq Mahmood Ali, left the group with the goal of setting up a bigger, national level organisation – the United Black Youth League – which would not represent British South Asians exclusively but also other people of colour. Their radical stance was witnessed in July of the same year, when they entered a major dispute with the police while protesting against a National Front demonstration in Bradford; this culminated in the arrest of twelve people of South Asian origin including Gata-Aura and Ali, on the pretext of manufacturing and using petrol bombs. The case of the Bradford Twelve received great attention from the media, mostly revolving around the question whether the threat posed by racism had reached the extent that it required extreme measures such as the use of petrol bombs to combat it. Though the mixed jury acquitted the Bradford Twelve, the incident created an ethical debate both within and outside the concerned groups on the approach they were taking to combat racism, using government funds which ultimately came from taxes (Hiro, 1991: 175-176; Layton-Henry, 1992: 144).

In addition, the ideologies that formed the fundament of all the groups and their actions were also undergoing a major transformation. As in the case of the United Black Youth Movement, there was a movement towards combined efforts on the part of the Afro-Caribbean and South Asian diasporas in Britain to fight against racism. The term ‘Black’ came to be understood to represent the oppressed and marginalised position that the communities had been forced to occupy. Their shared cultural memory of colonialism and the post-decolonisation experience of racist discrimination and alienation in Britain laid the foundation for identification with each other as well as for presenting a united front (Hiro, 1991: 176; Malik, 2002: 18). The Brixton Riots of 1981, a retaliation to the action called SWAMP’81 that allowed the police to stop and check cars on the basis of suspicion, in which Blacks had been specifically targeted,
underlined the shared nature of the problem. In response to these riots, the SYM called for a protest – the Black Freedom March – from Bradford to London. The dispute in the ideologies of the various groups became apparent when organisations like the Indian Worker’s Association-Great Britain lobbied for the participation of white anti-racists group at this event, while other bodies including the SYM wanted to keep it an exclusively Black affair. In the end the event did not take place (Hiro, 1991:176).

The 1981 riots also opened up the system of funding for organisations from the Manpower Services Commission, based on the understanding that a healthy communication between ethnic groups could prevent such events in future. Working at the grassroots levels in a responsible fashion and promoting awareness of the multi-ethnic and multicultural reality of Britain in general and the local area in particular, became a priority on the agenda of the local town halls. Further, Margaret Thatcher’s government oblivious stance towards the problems of race relations made it clear that new means of fighting racism had to replace the older ones. 1985 saw the last of the radical protests in the events in Handsworth and Broadwater Farm Estate in London (Hiro, 1991: 176-177).

The positive dialogue between the authorities and the ethnic minorities at local level proved to be highly fruitful, providing incentive to members of these communities to actively participate in politics. The result was a remarkable step forward in the history of race relations in Britain. For instance, in the London borough of Ealing, information about local services was offered in four Indian languages in addition to English and Polish. On the whole, job opportunities increased for people of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin in the local councils and town halls. And, in the field of education, opportunities to learn Indian languages at schools were made available. The most remarkable of all was however was the election of Keith Vaz, a British South Asian from Leicester, to the House of Commons in the 1987 General Elections. Vaz became the first MP of South Asian origin in the British government since the 1920s. In addition, there were three other Black candidates elected, who, unlike Vaz, had previous experience at politics at the local level (Hiro, 1991: 177).

The 80s also showed a gradual growth of a British South Asian middle class. Many second generation British South Asians attended universities and professional colleges, giving them the opportunity to climb the social ladder. In addition, South Asians from East Africa, who
continued to immigrate, had more capital. Even the situation of the British South Asian working class improved. House sharing, which had been a common phenomenon earlier, was not as prevalent anymore, as many members of the community opted for public housing. Although this turn apparently signified less discrimination on the basis of race in housing, the experience of many people of South Asian and African descent when trying to move to council estates told a different story. Many were unwelcome in majority white estates and chose to move back into the inner-city because of racial harassment. In a report called *Living In Terror* published by the Commission of Racial Equality in 1987, the situation was elaborated as follows: “[R]acial harassment at or near the home was widespread and common, affecting not only areas like inner cities where there are relatively large black populations but also areas with relatively small black populations” (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 178).

The police continued to have an indifferent attitude to such incidents, and many complaints and cases led nowhere. The Department of Environment’s survey in 1988 showed that only 20-40 percent of the victims of racial harassment were satisfied with the way the police had dealt with their case (Hiro, 1991: 179).

A positive development was that a majority of British South Asians were living in self-owned houses by the 80s including almost half of those in South East England. The boom in real estate prices here in this decade was of great benefit to them, and the *Sunday Times* 1989 survey revealed that among the 18,000 millionaires in Britain, 200 were of South Asian origin (Hiro, 1991: 179).

As a diasporic group, South Asians in Britain had always maintained a close connection to the homeland, whether it was on a personal, individual level through family and friends, or on a more political level through keeping in touch with developments on the subcontinent. The turbulent political atmosphere of the eighties in India did not just leave a mark on the subcontinent’s contemporary history but also led to a massive response from the diaspora in Britain. Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her Sikh bodyguards and the ensuing riots in North India as well as the debate around Khalistan had a heavy impact on the Sikh community in Britain. While some sided with the idea of Khalistan as a separate independent state for Sikhs and took radical steps towards its creation, others were more moderate in their convictions. Street fights erupted between the groups in areas like Gravesend and Kent. When Rajiv Gandhi
succeeded his mother as the Prime Minister of India, the situation escalated and in 1986, Tarsem Singh Toor, a Sikh businessman from Southall and supporter of Gandhi, was murdered. This was followed by other murders, including that of Guru Darshan Das, a leader of the moderate Sikh group in 1987. The Khalistan debate also enticed many young Sikhs to reconsider their religious and ethnic identity. Many reverted to growing their hair, wearing traditional clothing, and taking pride in displaying their religious identity (Hiro, 1991: 180-181; Layton-Henry, 1992: 108). A similar response was seen in the agitation and controversy surrounding the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*, which will be discussed in detail in the following section in connection with Islamophobia.

**2.2.6. Developments over the last 20 years**

The articulation of minority identities as ‘Black British’ or ‘British Asian’, incorporating the culture of origin, resulted in a new antagonism arising from a fear of loss of ‘authentic’ Britishness. The right wing faction of society continued to exhibit its contempt for multiculturalism, not just in the form of organised marches to provoke ethnic minorities, but also creating platforms on the internet to spread its xenophobic messages. The political and economic developments of globalisation and the rising importance of the European Union as a supra-entity in comparison to individual nations seemed to create for many a fear of losing national identity. This led to the emergence of new nationalisms, and related questions of belonging. This became apparent in the “Right leaning British political environment, particularly and tellingly in the period leading up to the 2001 General Elections” (Malik, 2002: 21-22).

Xenophobia expressed itself in racially motivated violence like the murder of Stephen Lawrence (1993). This crime, for which no one was convicted for almost two decades\(^\text{21}\), created uproar against the blatant racism of the British police. An official inquiry led by Sir William Macpherson concluded that the police force was institutionally racist and steps were needed to rid the force of such behaviour. The report also demanded the inculcation of racial equality in all bodies of education. As a result, the Race Relations Amendment Act was passed in 2000. Instead of hoping that organisations will be anti-racist, this Act makes them legally responsible if found

\(^{21}\) The case was resolved in early 2012 with Gary Dobson and David Norris being convicted and sentenced for the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 (*Stephen Lawrence: Gary Dobson and David Norris Get Life*, 4 Jan 2012).
to be racist. The Act further emphasized the importance of implementation of equal opportunity polices for the betterment of race relations (Cloake, Tudor, 2001: 75).

Nevertheless, racism seems to continue, as made clear by several comments by prominent British politicians in the last decade. William Hague said at the Conservative Party Conference in March 2001: “Let me take you on a journey to a foreign land – to Britain after a second term of Tony Blair.” John Townsend, following Hague’s speech, said: “Anglo-Saxon culture has been seriously undermined by immigration” and the British are becoming a “mongrel race” (as quoted in Cloake, Tudor, 2001: 77).

2.2.6.1. Multi-Ethnic Britain in the European Context

The history of immigration, especially in the context of the need to fill post-War labour deficits, and the racist responses to it was not a development restricted to Britain. Other western European countries showed similar trends; however, the bulk of the immigration to these countries occurred later than in Britain, mostly in the 60s and 70s, when their economies which had been shattered by the war had had a chance to recover and then boom. Whereas in Germany most of the immigrants were from countries like Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey, France, with a similar colonial history like Britain, wanted to tap the manpower of its former colonies in West Africa (Layton-Henry, 1992: 215). In many countries, the general assumption was that migrant workers were a temporary solution to labour shortages. Immigrants from foreign countries would come and work in the host countries for a while, helping their economies but also profiting themselves and improving their living conditions and then finally return to their homelands. However, this was not the case and, in spite of governments encouraging repatriation (especially in the 70s) in times of economic crises, many immigrants had found solid footing in these countries and did not necessarily want to return (Layton-Henry, 1992: 218).

The rise of political asylum seekers from Eastern Europe in the mid 80s resulted in a renewal of strong anti-immigrant sentiment in countries of Western Europe; extremist groups with racist ideologies won public approval and became more and more powerful. The resentment felt against the presence of foreigners was very apparent on the eve of German reunification, as the right-wing Republikaner party gained 11 seats in the German parliament. In France too, the
rise in power of right wing groups like Le Pen’s Front National was notable, and there was a drastic increase in racially motivated violence (Layton-Henry, 1992: 224-226).

Such parallel developments in many European countries laid the foundation for a common approach in dealing with problems of immigration. Though Britain was not in favour of such a pan-European, common immigration policy in the beginning as it felt that matters concerning this subject were too significant for national security, countries like Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg initiated the Schengen Agreement, allowing free movement across their internal national borders. The Schengen Group, established in 1985, was to grow throughout the 90s and the next decade as more countries opened their borders. The development of Schengen also resulted in common immigration policies (applicable to those who wanted to enter these countries but were not citizens) and a common shared intelligence, as well as a tight policing network to avoid entry of illegal immigrants. To some, this was tantamount to building, “Fortress Europe” where being European seems to be synonymous with being white (Mason, 1995: 122).

Mason summarizes the implications of these developments for transnational movement of coloured people in general, and coloured citizens of the UK in particular, as follows:

Given that in some countries of the Union there are large populations of non-citizens, it is not difficult to see how appearing to be different, and particularly having a darker skin, could be taken as prima-facie evidence of non citizen status – or even illegal entry (Birmingham City Council, Race Relations Unit, 1991). Were such a situation to develop, it could seriously undermine the freedom of movement of British citizens of the EU who are of minority ethnic origin (1995: 122-123).

On the question of citizenship as well, in spite of its membership to the European Union, Britain has retained its own laws. According to Mason, the concept of citizenship implies more than just nationality, and Britain’s restraint from fully accepting European citizenship laws narrows the spectrum of rights associated with citizenship available to British citizens. He cites the example of industrial citizenship which amounts to additional rights at the workplace, which is unavailable to British citizens as yet. On the flipside, however, when it comes to Race Relations, the British legislation is much more extensive than in many European nations. Additionally, many of the long-term coloured immigrants are not yet recognised as citizens of some European countries. Harmonising legislation in Britain with that of the Schengen Group may prove to be disadvantageous to the ethnic minorities residing in Britain (1995: 122).
The post-9/11 developments in Britain and the rest of Europe in the field of legislation and its implementation as a measure to combat terrorism have renewed the significance of questions of rights and freedoms of coloured minorities as ‘new’ categories of racialisation emerge.

2.2.6.2. Newer Forms of Xenophobia

On the eve of the new millennium, questions of race relations have taken yet another turn with newer forms of racism emerging. Categories of discriminations have shifted from skin colour, ideology (especially in the post-Cold War world) to the capitalist criterion of economy and finance and, particularly in the post-9/11 world, to religion. In the wake of globalisation, which goes hand in hand with the emergence of supra-national structures of economic as well as political power, elaborated in the previous section, migration is more controlled than ever. A. Sivanandan explains these newer forms of racism and xenophobia, where the Other is a new Other as:

It is a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe’s doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a ‘natural’ fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but ‘xeno’ in form. It is a racism meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism (as quoted in Fekete, 2009: 19).

Liz Fekete argues that this xeno-racism is applicable to Muslims, especially in the context of post-9/11 and 7/7 security measures taken particularly in Europe and the U.S. to prevent further acts of terrorism. She explains the discrimination against Muslims as institutional in nature.

Post-September 11 the parameters of institutionalized xeno-racism – anti-foreignness – have been expanded to include minority ethnic communities that have been settled in Europe for decades, simply because they are Muslim. Since Islam now represents ‘threat to Europe’, its Muslim residents, even though they are citizens, even though they are European-born, are caught up in the ever-expanding loop of xeno-racism. They do not merely threaten Europe as the ‘enemy within’ in the war on terror, their adherence to Islamic norms and values threatens the notion of Europeaness itself. Under the guise of patriotism, a wholesale anti-
Islamic racism has been unleashed that itself threatens to destroy the fabric of multiculturalism (2009: 45).

In the context of Britain, however, Muslims might not be a new Other altogether. Britain’s population of approximately two million Muslims comprise of a majority of individuals of South Asian descent. This group of British South Asian Muslims arrived on British shores as unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, and have suffered racism on grounds of skin colour like their Hindu and Sikh counterparts. They have been the ethnic or racial Other in British race relations discourse (Modood, 2002: 195).

2.2.6.3. Islamophobia – Definition and Historical Context

Islamophobia or fear of Islam has become more prevalent in recent times and is considered to be a form of cultural racism, the Other here being a religious Other. Though not a new phenomenon, the word to denote this form of cultural racism – Islamophobia – “has been coined because there is a new reality that needs naming: anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item is needed in the vocabulary so that it can be identified and acted against” (The Runnymede Trust, 1997: 4). While defining Islamophobia, the Runnymede Trust distinguishes between an open and a closed view on Islam, the closed view entailing the main characteristics that broadly embody what this form of xenophobia pertains. An Islamophobic view would look at Islam as “monolithic, separate, inferior, enemy, manipulative [and would] reject the criticism of the West made by Islam, defend anti-Muslim discrimination and consider the Islamophobic view as natural” (1997: 5).

Tahir Abbas elaborates the development of this phenomenon in the context of discourses on race relations in Britain:

Although conceptual overlaps exist, the British discourse on racialized minorities has been transformed from “color” in the 1950s and 1960s; to race in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; to ethnicity in the 1990s; and to “religion” in the present climate. Here Islam has the greatest profile. British popular discourse has shifted from seeing minorities as homogenous entities to discerning differences within and between “Blacks” and Asians; then within South Asians, to differences among Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, and finally among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Religion has emerged as a major signifier (2004: 27).

Islam has been constructed as the religious Other of Europe since its origin in 622 AD. This construction has been predominantly negative because of fears of conversion of Christians
to Islam and to keep Muslims outside the borders of Europe. “Muslims have been portrayed as barbaric, ignorant, closed-minded, semi-citizens, maddened terrorists, or intolerant religious zealots” (Abbas, 2004: 28). These negative attributions have perpetuated until the present day and play an important role in the contemporary fears that Islam invokes in the minds of many. In present day Britain; however, the fear of Islam is also derived from other fears, like that of race and immigration, as many Muslims belong to ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, while traditional markers of “race” have been afforded legislative protection, the same does not hold for “religious” markers, where protection is restricted only to ethnically defined religious communities through case law, namely members of the ethnic Jewish and the ethnic Sikh communities in Britain (Abbas, 2004: 29).


### 2.2.6.4. The Controversy of Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses.

In September 1988 Viking Penguin published Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses, a fictional narrative regarded by many of being blasphemous towards Islam as it was said to depict the Koran and the Prophet in an unfavourable light. Soon after the publication of the controversial book, prominent British Muslim leaders pleaded with the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to ban it and take legal action against Salman Rushdie, a British Muslim, for defaming the religion. This was, however, not accepted by the government, on grounds that The Satanic Verses was a work of literary fiction. Citing the contemporary successful prosecution of the magazine Gay News on grounds of being blasphemous against Christianity by publishing a poem portraying Jesus as a homosexual, agitated Muslims approached the Home Secretary to be able to obtain a ban on the same grounds. When they were turned down again, they took to the streets, first in Bolton in Lancashire, where in December 1988, the outraged demonstrators burnt a copy of The Satanic Verses. On the 14th of January 1989 another book was burnt in Bradford, where more than 25 percent of the town’s population at that time were of Islamic faith. Though this
protest propelled the matter into the national press, it was to no avail. Following this, late January saw another large protest, where 8000 Muslims from all over the nation demonstrated in London, with a plea to the publisher to withdraw the book from the market (Hiro, 1991: 182-184).

Such demonstrations were also organised in other countries with large Muslim populations like Pakistan, and in February of the same year, after the release of the American edition of the book, the prominent religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against Rushdie. He declared:

I would like to inform all the fearless Muslims in the world that the author of the book titled The Satanic Verses, which has been compiled, printed and published in opposition to Islam, the Prophet and the Quran, and those publishers who were aware of its contents, are sentenced to death. I will call on all zealous Muslims to execute them quickly, where they find them, so that no one will dare to insult Islamic sanctity. Whoever is killed on this path will be regarded as a martyr (as quoted in Hiro, 1991: 184-185).

As a British national Rushdie was able to seek police protection and went into hiding. However, Khomeini’s fatwa gained increasing support of political as well as religious leaders of Islamic countries and the Indian subcontinent and was also met with agreement by many Muslim leaders in Europe. The controversy sparked by the fatwa led to many European nations breaking diplomatic ties with Iran. For many British Muslims the fatwa and the resulting severing of diplomatic relations with Iran seemed to be a radical measure, with the danger of jeopardising their own economic welfare. Whereas international Muslim organisations like the Islamic Conference Organisation, funded to a large extent by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, were in full support of the fatwa, a poll conducted by the BBC showed a majority of British Muslims questioning the fatwa (Hiro, 1991: 186-187).

The reactions prompted by the fatwa, disparate as they were even among the British Muslims, did, however, raise questions on matters of immigration, integration and cultural difference in Britain. Summarising the various issues raised by the Rushdie affair both on local and national levels Solomos states: “The affair has also given impetus to multiple cultural and political identities that have been included in the broad categorisation of black and ethnic minority communities” (1993: 223). In his essay Integrating Minorities, Bikhu Parekh cites the affair as a significant moment in history of immigration and race relations debates in Britain,
evoking extreme responses from the adherers of both the bifurcationist and assimilationist models of nationhood, questioning the loyalty of British Muslims to their nation (1998: 20-21). The controversy also marked the first large scale political mobilisation of British Muslims and, by bringing religion into the equation of race relations where hitherto the category of race had been the leading issue, it successfully shed light on the complex nature of cultural identities (Solomos, 1993: 223).

The Gulf War (1990-1991) and, more recently, the acts of terrorism of the last decade and the subsequent legislation have intensified this debate on religion, culture and national identity (Abbas, 2004: 34).

2.2.6.5. The Aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7: The Discourse of ‘The Enemy Within’

As the previous sections have elaborated, though the construction of Islamic Other and the resulting xenophobia have had a history spanning almost a thousand years, the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York has resulted in a renewed and potentially more vigorous form of racism against Muslims. Liz Fekete and Tahir Abbas argue the attacks of 9/11 have not just had an effect on global measures to international terrorism, but local forms of discrimination, both institutional and cultural, against Muslims (Fekete, 2009: 44; Abbas, 2004: 34).

With repeated reiterations of the ‘clash of the civilisations thesis’, in differing contexts, after 9/11 the popular constructions of Islamic Other as “a rival and inferior civilization” are manifold (Modood, 2002: 193). There is an underlying confusion between three differing topics here, i.e. terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and Islam, asserts Tariq Modood. This, in turn, propagates an unbridgeable rift between Islam and the rest of the world. He further seeks to disprove the notion of Islam being a ‘civilisation’ with beliefs and values starkly divergent from Judaism or Christianity, all three sharing a single origin and underlying principles (2002: 194).

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22 The assimilationist model advocates the thought of “a cohesive nation bound together by a common language and culture, a sense of kinship and common descent, a shared view of history, and a strong sense of national identity.” It would imply that loyalties of any other kind, which went against this idea of nationhood would be a disgrace. Applied to immigrant minorities, the model expects them to “get fully assimilated into the British nation or to leave the country.” The bifurcationist model on the other hand is “ hospitable to cultural diversity” insofar as it does not propagate the “‘flattening’ process of assimilation which deprive[s] the minorities of their ‘national characteristics and culture.’” However, it adheres to a set a political values with originate from the majority culture (Parekh, 1998: 15-16).

23 The Bradford Council of Mosques was a prime example of an organisation which helped mobilise political opinion and action on the Rushdie affair “on the basis of representing particular religious communities, and reject[ing] the idea of organising within the limits of traditional party politics” (Solomos, 1993: 223).
In the context of contemporary Britain, where a majority population of Muslims are of South Asian origin, the War on Terror, which Tony Blair’s regime enthusiastically supported, prompted harsh reactions from the Muslim community within Britain. Many Muslims, among others, felt the need to condemn the action that the state was taking in reaction to the attacks of September 11, including the largest Islamic pressure group in Britain – Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) – and as they did so, they attracted attention to themselves (Abbas, 2004: 32-33).

In addition to the public fear of Islam, which resulted in physical assaults on Muslims like the one leading to the death of an Afghan driver in London following September 11 (Abbas, 2004: 32), the discrimination against Muslims was arguably given an institutional form. Intensive policing of Muslims was one of the measures taken by the British government to combat terrorism and weed out sleeper terror cells of which Melanie Phillips speaks in her book *Londonistan* (2006). Liz Fekete cites the repercussions of this move:

> The effect of the heavy-handed police raids on Muslim meeting places and homes was, in the aftermath of September 11, also a primary concern to the Muslim community in the UK. The Muslim Safety Forum, set up in the wake of September 11 to liaise with the Metropolitan Police, was soon reporting that British Muslims felt discriminated against and victimised and were losing faith in the police. There was a particular concern about the extension of the stop-and-search powers. According to *Statewatch*, more than 71,000 stop and searches were conducted in 2002-03 as a part of anti-terrorist operations. But arrests were made in only 1.18 percent of cases, the vast majority of which were not connected to terrorism (2009: 53).

Such operations proved conclusively that religious profiling of Muslims in general was the basis of methods adopted by the police in rooting out terrorism. Furthermore, there were cases where Muslims (journalists) were persecuted, because of crimes of association, all over Europe (Fekete, 2009: 54-57).

The year 2002 saw another case that could qualify as an example of institutional racism, where, in addition to politicians and government organisations, the media had a large role to play. Based on intelligence from MI 5, arrests were made on grounds of suspicion of terrorist plans to poison people travelling on the London tube, in accordance with the Terrorism Act.

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24 The key marker by which the murderers identified their victims was appearance. The long beard and attire made this taxi driver allegedly resemble Osama Bin Laden (Abbas, 2004: 32).

25 The stop and search operation conducted by the police appears to be reminiscent of the police action of 1981-SWAMP’81 which was one of the primary causes of the 1981 Brixton Riots mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter.
2000. The issue became a scandal when the *Sunday Times* reported it on the front page, claiming that the MI 5 had successfully foiled this planned attack. A comment made by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, further stated that the arrested men belonged to a ‘terror cell’. However, in court the prosecution did not bring up the aspect of bombs or explosives or chemical substances. And later the deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, acknowledged that there had been no evidence of any plan of a terrorist attack. However, the charges that were faced by the arrested men were that they possessed chemical substances that could be used in terrorism and that they had false passports (Fekete, 2009: 58-59).

In the wake of the 7/7 London bombings, where British-born Muslims (three of Pakistani and one of Afro-Caribbean origin) carried out suicide bombings killing 52 commuters, the notion of ‘the enemy within’ has gained impetus. Policing of Muslims has taken on a “McCarthyite” style all over Europe (Fekete, 2009: 102). In Britain, one of the steps taken was the passing of new anti-terrorism legislation, which targets British nationals in addition to foreigners through the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005. The shift in focus from not just combating terrorism by means of identifying and prosecuting those charged with actual acts of terrorism, but also to inciting eventual terrorism through “glorification” of acts of terror, was introduced by the Terrorism Act 2006 (Hanman, 22 Jan 2009). The new Acts were heavily controversial because of their alleged contradiction of the Human Rights Act of 1998 (Hanman, 22 Jan 2009), which led to “British-born Muslims [being] viewed as a high risk groups whose freedoms must be curtailed” (Fekete, 2009: 106). Even before these Acts were passed, institutions, particularly universities, were encouraged to keep an eye out for any signs of radical thought and extremist ideology. Anthony Glees and Chris Pope of the Social Affairs Unit published a report soon after the London bombings called *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorism and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, which identified bodies of higher education as possible breeding grounds for extremist ideology, and outlined measures that universities should take to combat this by working closely with MI 5. In the following year, Bill Rammell, the Minister for Higher Education, “issued further guidelines to universities to target ‘violent extremism in the name of Islam’, with universities asked to share information with security services regarding suspicious students and external speakers” (Fekete, 2009: 108). Universities as institutions which have allowed free academic intercourse and have been mainly, by virtue of this, the birthplace for
movements of freedom, were now placed under high surveillance, “with serious consequences for civil liberties” (Fekete, 2009: 108). The measures elaborated above were in accordance with the Terrorism Act of 2006, mentioned earlier, that broadened the legal definition of terrorism.

2008 saw another legislative measure in the Counter-Terrorism Bill which “further ‘widens the net of innocent people who can be incriminated’, at the same time affording greater penalties for those convicted of vague offences […], including confiscation of property, bans on foreign travel and requirements to report to the police whenever staying away from home” (Fekete, 2009: 109). It does not just “[enable] post-charge questioning of terrorist suspects [but also] allows constables to take fingerprints and DNA samples from individuals subject to control orders [and] amends the definition of terrorism by inserting a racial clause” (Hanman, 22 Jan 2009). Many cases show innocent people have been convicted under these Acts. One such interesting example that shows the controversial repercussions of these legislative measures is the case of Rizwaan Sabir, a student from Nottingham University, and an administrative member of the staff, Hicham Yezza. As part of his research on extremist Islamic organisations Sabir accessed “an edited version of the al Qaida handbook from a US government website” (Fekete, 2009: 210), which also happened to be on the reading list of the politics department and available for purchase on Amazon. Since he himself did not have the possibility of printing it, he used the printer of Hicham Yezza. When another staff member saw this, he reported it to the authorities at the university, who called the police. Both Yezza and Sabir were arrested, detained and questioned before eventual release when they were not found guilty. Yezza, who though Algerian by birth had been living in the UK for thirteen years was rearrested, however, on charges dealing with immigration and where he was found guilty and then sentenced to deportation; this order was later retracted when other influential academics demonstrated against it publicly. The case highlights, first and foremost, the vulnerable situation Muslim students find themselves in in contemporary Britain, where they can be accused with almost no evidence at all of being terrorists. Secondly, it also sheds light on “the threat to academic freedom posed by the university’s ‘disproportionate’ response to the possession of legitimate research material” (Fekete, 2009: 110-111).

With such cases portraying the ease with which these highly flexible laws can be applied to curtail basic human rights of freedom, and the fact that both the police as well as the
intelligence agencies have repeatedly targeted innocent Muslims, it can be said, that the xenoracism has taken a very specific form in the contemporary socio-political climate today. It is a racism based on faith rather than other categories of discrimination. The fact that, in Britain specifically, many victims of this racism are of South Asian origin, a minority group that has also been historically constructed as the colonised, racial and ethnic Other provokes the thought that this new form of racism should be viewed not only in the context of the historical construct of the Islamic Other but also in the context of a continuum of disparate power relations that have been a part of the history of race relations in Britain.

2.3. Representations of British South Asians in British Audio-Visual Media: A Historical Overview

Audio-visual media, undoubtedly one of the major areas of representation since its beginning with cinema in late 19th century, relies on images to construct narratives. The images that an audio-visual narrative projects and their relationship to reality “is problematic if it is implied there is some direct transfer of material reality from the object to the image” (Young, 1996: 8). In spite of the fact that there exists a general consensus and recognition that audio-visual texts are constructs like other forms of art; the relationship of an image to the object it refers to has been the focus of many academic studies. Positive and negative images of certain groups of people that an audio-visual narrative portrays, stereotyping, and its consequences have been significant to discussions, especially when one considers the impact of the medium of film on present day discourses on race and ethnicity. A need for “authentic” representations remains an object of desire (Young, 1996: 8, 9). It is in this context that the experiences of Black Britons26 and among them British South Asians can be linked to the history of their representations. These representations are not just an expression of existing prejudices but have also helped further them as they re-circulate the prejudices and fix them, creating stereotypes.

Jim Pines sums up the major trends in the representation of coloured people in Britain for the audio-visual genre of cinema:

Black representation in British cinema is inextricably bound up in colonial and race relations discourses. Typically, narrative stress tends to be on ideological constructions of

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26 A political term that used to signify the coloured ethnic minorities in Britain, based on the common experience of colonialism and post-decolonisation, racist discrimination.
“blacks” as either the exotic or the threatening “Other”. The Eurocentric motif, moreover, is usually articulated with equally divisive constructions of “whiteness” or “Britishness” (the two identities are conflated in this context), in which Empire looms large as a kind of Manichean framing device (2001: 177).

British audio-visual media has, in its narratives, constructed the Self against the Other; the racial difference and its typing and fixing as stereotypes has been emphasized through this process. Though the history of representation of race in British cinema cannot be viewed as a continuous process because of many disruptions, moments where imperial and racially defined ideologies surface over and again can be identified (Pines, 2001: 177).

What Pines says here in the context of British cinema’s representation of people of colour can be argued to be applicable to other forms of audio-visual discourse. Taking this into consideration, the following section tries to chart a broad historical overview of representations of British South Asians in British audio-visual media, concentrating on cinema and television. It tries to trace moments that have left marks not just on the discourse of representation of race but also on the race relations discourse in Britain.

2.3.1. Empire Films: First Audio-Visual Representations of the South Asian Subcontinent and its People

The discourse of representations of British South Asians in British cinema and television originates in the early history of the audio-visual medium, before the large-scale migration of South Asians from the subcontinent to the British Isles, when the Empire was still more or less intact. Although the objects of representation here were nothing similar to contemporary British South Asians and the main focus lay on the Empire and the Colonised, these first texts set the trend for representations of people of South Asian descent, which later representations followed or contested. In British cinema, the first significant representations of the Indian subcontinent came with what were known as the Empire films of the 1930s and 40s. Among the most popular were those made by the Korda brothers, Hungarian born film makers who founded the production house ‘London Films’. Among their famous series of Empire films two were set on the Indian subcontinent – The Elephant Boy (1937) and The Drum (1938). Both were adaptations of literary works, the first a filmic rendering of Kipling’s Toomai Of Elephants and the latter based on the works of A.E.W. Mason (Duguid, KE); the films have been criticised for
emphasizing “the unique imperial status, cultural and racial superiority and patriotic pride not only of the British but of the entire white western world” (Chowdhry, 2001: 1) and not “[offering] any criticism of Britain’s far flung Empire … [but being] hymns of praise to the spirit of the Empire” (McFarlane, 1998: 128). Though the films used ‘blacking up’ white actors to play roles of coloured people, a technique that would still be a part of highly acclaimed films like Attenborough’s Gandhi (1982) through to the 80s, it also featured, Sabu, “Britain’s first above-the-title film star of Indian origin” (Brooke) who would go on to appear in other international films, like The Thief Of Baghdad (1940) and The Jungle Book (1942). Among other productions which featured the subcontinent was the Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s Black Narcissus, a film released in May 1947, a few months before Indian independence. The film represents the ‘an empire in decline’ narrative, foreground[ing] the emotionally and sexually unstable experience of empire undergone by its female characters” (Cross, 2007: 595; italics in original). It portrays the trials and tribulations that nuns face while setting up a convent to help the local ‘natives’ in a place, described by the male lead characters as the “Back of Beyond” of India (Black Narcissus, 1947)\(^\text{27}\). The eerie palace which is supposed to be converted into a convent is situated on the top of a mountain, in the Himalayan ranges, and was used by the previous occupant, a general, to house his harem, and is decorated with erotic paintings of women. In this setting, caught between the locals with their ‘peculiar’ habits and the present general’s controversial agent, Mr. Dean, who does not keep his sexual exploits a secret, the women are forced to reflect on their choice of entering the order among other existential quandaries and are finally driven out when tragedy strikes them. The exception is Sabu who plays the eager-to-learn young General who finally gives in to the ways of his ancestors rather than pursuing Western education further.

Apart from British productions, many famous American films of this period were set in the Empire. Among them, Lives Of A Bengal Lancer (1935), Wee Willie Winkie (1937) and Gunga Din (1939), like their British counterparts, worked at reaffirming the ideology of the Empire in a period when the Empire was a topic of much heated debate in Britain and the notion of a shift towards a Commonwealth was gaining acceptance (Richards, 1986).

\(^{27}\) The quote from *Black Narcissus* is self-transcribed and from the DVD.
In addition to full length features, a wide range of nonfiction short films depicting British India were also made. Starting from the silent *Panorama Of Calcutta, India, From The River Ganges* (1899), where there is a controversy whether the footage actually belongs to Calcutta or is some other part of the Ganges bank, to the Oscar-winning cinematographer, Jack Cardiff’s travelogue *A Road In India* (1938) which was shot in colour and had commentary, ‘the jewel in the crown’ of the British empire was presented to the audience at home.\(^{28}\) In an analysis of the last film, published on the official website of British Film Institute (BFI), Jez Stewart states: “For all its exploration of a different culture, there is little effort to promote understanding and identification between subject and the audience. While finding beauty and interest on the road in India, it simultaneously dismisses it as a primitive and ‘other’ world”.

2.3.2. Early Representation of South Asians on British Television
The first appearance of coloured people on British television was on the debut BBC in November 1936, and featured Buck and Bubbles, African-American variety show artists performing live (Pines, 1992: 9; Malik, 2002: 91). The early years of television continued to feature black variety performers like Adelaide Hall and Elisabeth Welch, mostly women from foreign countries being the only coloured faces shown (Malik, 2002: 111). Only after television broadcast was resumed after (being suspended during) the Second World War did coloured actors begin to get roles in other genres. One of the first such productions was the 1946 adaptation of Eugene O’Neil’s play *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* with Robert Adams, Pauline Henriques, and Edric Connor in the cast (Pines, 1992: 9). These early years were marked by a complete invisibility of South Asian faces in/on television, with white actors being ‘blacked up’ to play South Asian roles where necessary. (Malik, 2002: 136)

South Asians appeared on television much later, only in the fifties, coinciding with the first major wave of immigration from the subcontinent to the mother country. One of the first programmes was the *Asian Club* (BBC, 1953-61), a studio based discussion, broadcast live, with the target audience from the Commonwealth. It was a television version of a long running programme on BBC Radio, made to celebrate the successful running of BBC’s General Overseas Service for over twenty years (Malik, 2002: 56). Susan Hayward suggests that programmes like

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\(^{28}\) Both films are available to watch on the British Film Institute’s official channel on You Tube on the web.
this were meant to uphold the “notion of Commonwealth so vital to the Establishment post
decolonisation”, and the people who took part in it were portrayed as members of ex-colonies,
not as members of British society (1997).

The acknowledgement of coloured immigration and the presence of coloured citizens in
the mother country came with first news broadcasts following the introduction of BBC’s
Concentrating more on Afro-Caribbean rather than South Asian immigration in particular, Malik
talks of the early new footage, which has become a part of the cultural memory of the British.
“The predominant early newsreel footage was of Black Commonwealth citizens coming to
Britain in the post-war years – Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts) singing ‘London is the place
for me’ as he stepped off Empire Windrush, various ‘waves’ of immigration from the
Commonwealth, images of ‘the newcomers’” (Malik, 2002: 83). Later, in the wake of the riots in
Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958, the big issue that was thematised in the news was not
“British racism or the ineptness of the police, but [...] the presence of a ‘colour problem’ in
particular geographical areas and housing estates” (Malik, 2002: 83).

In 1955, BBC’s show Special Enquiry (BBC, 1952-1957) ran a full length documentary
Has Britain A Colour Bar? (BBC, 1955) presented by Robert Reid. With a narrative style
comprising of snippets of filmed reports and reconstructions, an ‘official’ narrative voice
provided by Rene Cutforth and various ‘non-official’ voices, the show was supposed to
showcase the audience’s perspective on the issue. When the producer Anthony De Lotbiniere
was questioned regarding the choice of the topic, he said that it had not been intentional, “that
there was no conscious effort to cover the subject but it was seen as both a sensitive and topical
issue” (Malik, 2002: 37).

While it is clear that representations of South Asians in early years of British television
were next to negligible, the representations of coloured people – mainly people of Afro-
Caribbean descent – were questionable in their politics, plagued with binaries, and other
structures of oppression, which reflected the attitude of the general public towards the coloured
population. This would become even more apparent in the next decade.
2.3.3. The ‘Race Sitcoms’ of the 60s and the 70s

The genre of comedy can provide a spectacular insight into the inner workings of society, shedding light on power structures, by asking the question of who is laughing at whom. Andy Medhurst explains this supposition with the following example:

When (outside the rather self-conscious domain of the ‘alternative’ comedy) did you last hear a joke that began ‘there was this white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied man went into a pub...’? There are not, for example, thousands of jokes about mothers-in-law because mothers-in-laws are intrinsically or ‘naturally’ funny people, but because in a culture which has certain assumptions about gender, age and power, the mother-in-law is a threatening figure, a potential danger to men (a castrating force, if you feel the need to adopt the language of psychoanalysis), and the battery of jokes deployed against her are one way of trying to defuse that threat (1989: 15-16).

However, there is an ambivalent side to the message of comedy as well, and the joke can be ironic. “The laugher and the laughed at are not fixed, immutable positions, there is always a significant amount of blurring [...] Comedy is too slippery, too wicked, to wily to ever be pinned down on the altar of ideological purity” (Medhurst, 1989: 16).

When applied to the sitcoms of the 60s and 70s in Britain, this approach sheds light on ambivalence of aspects of representation of racial difference. One of the most debated situational comedy texts of the 60s and the 70s which thematised aspects of racial difference even without the presence of a main coloured character was Till Death Do Us Part (BBC, 1966-68, 1972, 1974-77). The character of Alf Garnett, conceived by the writer Johnny Speight as a satirical embodiment of the system and therefore characterised as “pig-ignorant” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 93), became very popular with the audience. “Alf Garnett, a die-hard believer in ‘the Establishment’, was stirring it up in people’s living rooms, speaking the unspeakable (‘coons’, ‘kikes’ and ‘wogs’) and thus working against the grain of expected liberal (television) caution.”

His “flawed, bigoted and reactionary” nature, however, was opposed by that of his daughter, who depicted “the voice of reason” and son-in-law Mike, who “was the symbol of liberal youth designed to provoke Alf” (Malik, 2002: 92-93). In spite of this constellation of different characters, it was Alf who became a public favourite because “Alf’s views, for many, appeared logical (if extreme) attitudes towards race, validated their racist opinions”, in a time when Powell’s agenda of repatriation was at its height, and media was saturated with issues of coloured immigration (Malik, 2002: 93). In this context many missed the satire that Speight had
intended Alf’s character to portray, instead understanding him at face value and sympathising with him. Yet for others, who caught the satire, Alf was the butt of the joke. The ambiguity produced by the multiple levels of meanings that the text brings forth, does not allow the *Till Death Do Us Part* to be easily pinned down as a ‘racist’ or ‘anti-racist’ text. The popularity, on the other hand, inspired Johnny Speight not only to write the movie script *Till Death* (1968) and a further series broadcast on BBC in 1972, it also was an inspiration for Norman Lear’s American production *All In The Family* (CBS, 1971 -83) (Malik, 2002: 94).

Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech motivated Johnny Speight’s new ‘anti-racist comedy’ venture, *Curry And Chips* (LWT29 for ITV, 1969), a sitcom that acknowledged the fact in its characters that Britain was becoming ethnically and racially diverse. It also introduced the first significant South Asian representation in British sitcoms through a half South Asian character on TV with the ‘blacked up’ actor Spike Milligan who played the half Pakistani-half Irish, Kevin O’Grady. The constellation of characters in this sitcom included a white male, Norman, played by Norman Rossing, who would express his racist views without any compunctions, a black worker, Kenny, played by black actor Kenny Lynch, a white liberal, Arthur, played by Eric Skyes, and the stereotypical foreigner, ‘the Paki-Paddy’ Kevin.30 *Curry And Chips* distinguished between the Afro-Caribbean and the South Asian diaspora, not just in the choice of actors, but also in the plot, where the British-born character black Kenny poked fun at the ‘foreigner’ Kevin. “Kenny, the comedy’s only ‘real’ black character (i.e. not ‘blacked-up’ like O’Grady), was as vehement as the comedy’s other racist characters in his ‘anti-wog’ stance” (Malik, 2002: 95). The show, however, failed drastically and had to be cancelled after a mere six episodes (Jaafar).

A series that had (some) South Asians playing South Asians was *It Ain’t Half Hot Mum* (BBC, 1974-81). The sitcom, which followed the style of *Dad’s Army* (1968-77) and was conceived by the same writer team of David Croft and Jimmy Perry, was set in a Royal Artillery Camp in colonial India. Indian characters in the camp were the bearers, lower in the official hierarchy than the white officers. Of the bearers, the main character, Rangi Ram, was played by ‘blacked up’ white actor, Michael Bates. A ‘real’ South Asian actor, Dino Shafeek, was cast to

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29 London Weekend Television
30 The foreignness of the character of Kevin O’Grady was highlighted not just through the ‘blacked up’ skin colour but also through attributes like his accent and his gestures, which were of stereotypical nature (Malik, 2002: 95).
play another bearer, Char Wallah Muhammad. Both were portrayed as “grovelling sycophants who adopt the rhetoric and habits of the English in order to curry favour with their colonial ‘superiors’. They reject their compatriots as "natives" and sneer at their ignorant ways” (Lee).

Another popular sitcom of the seventies that thematised the multi-ethnic diversity of Britain was *Mind Your Language* (LWT for ITV, 1977-79). The setting was provided by an English language school, where foreigners from various countries (European and non-European) came to learn the language from Jeremy Brown. The humour was mostly a product of interaction between these various foreigners who “clung so tightly to their popular crude national stereotypes” (Malik, 2002: 96). Among the students were also three South Asians, a Bangladeshi woman Jamila, a Pakistani man, Ali and an Indian Sikh man, Ranjeet. Perhaps, in an effort to be politically correct, the show had representative characters of all three large countries of the subcontinent which were the primary contributors to the building of the South Asian diaspora in Britain. Through the numerous quarrels between the Indian-Sikh and the Pakistani-Muslim, based on politics of their respective countries of origin, it also managed a rather sketchy representation of difference among South Asians, bringing in the aspect of the homeland in diasporic identity. In a rather underdeveloped fashion, it did manage to evoke the sense of a non-essentialised British South Asian identity, which, however got completely covered in the yoke of stereotypical ‘racist’ characterisation. With regard to this sitcom Malik notes:

The source of humour was not just racial difference, but more specifically non-Englishness (denoted in their [the characters’] accents, customs, clothes, and the situations they would find themselves in). The only racially ‘neutral’ character was (that is, with no ‘obvious’ racial characteristics) was the English teacher, Jeremy Brown (played by Barry Evans) (2002: 96).

Andy Medhurst has an even harsher opinion on *Mind Your Language*:

If any sitcom deserves the dismissive rubber-stamping of ‘racist’, it must be *Mind Your Language*. Set in an English class, it reached some kind of new peak by including every recognisable non-British stereotype in every episode – Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Japanese, Sikh, Turk, Greek, German, etcetera, etcetera. It had one joke: these-foriegners-are-hilarious-because-they-all-talk-funny-don’t-they. As a B-picture comedy film from the 1930s it might have had more of an excuse for existing, but in a multi-cultural society of the 1970s its cheapness, its monotony, and its sheer bare-faced ignorance had no place whatsoever (1989: 18-19).
Almost a decade later, in 1985, when Michael Grade, who was with LWT at the time when *Mind Your Language* was broadcast, was asked if the sitcom was racist, he agreed, saying that “It was really irresponsible of us to put it out” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 97). Yet, 1986 saw a new series of the sitcom broadcasted in selected regions by ITV31 (Malik, 2002: 97).32

### 2.3.4. Other Representations of the South Asian Diaspora on British Television in the 60s and the 70s

Quantitatively, the representation of British South Asians was considerably lower in the genre of television drama, in comparison to Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain. Members of the latter group were cast in TV dramas as early as 1956 in, for example, John Elliot’s *A Man From The Sun* broadcast on the BBC, a drama that tries to depict “the West Indian immigrant experience of Britain” (Pines, 1992: 9). In contrast, South Asian representation came in the form of the first TV dramatisation of *A Passage To India* directed by Waris Hussein with actor Zia Mohyeddin playing the role of Dr. Aziz, as a part of BBC TV’s series *Play Of The Month* in 1965 (Pines, 1992:11).

#### 2.3.4.1. First Instances of Multicultural Programming – An ‘assimilationist’ Agenda?

As a result of the growing discontent with the lack of coloured representation on television, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, founded in 1965, mounted pressure on the television channels, BBC and ITV, to “provide programmes which made Britain’s Black communities feel a more integral part of British society, and Asians in particular argued the case for a separate programme” (Malik, 2002: 56). One result was the setting up of the Immigrants’ Unit of BBC that produced programmes for both TV and radio, the first step towards multicultural programming. This unit produced two programmes that ran in the 60s, specially targeting

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31 In spite of the criticism that *Mind Your Language* received in Britain, a version *Zabaan Sambhal Ke* was made for the national channel in India, DD Metro and two series were broadcasted in 1993. The concept of the language school functioned with students from different states in India, having different mother tongues, in addition to some foreigners wanting to learn Hindi. Jokes of the same nature, this time resting more on the linguistic differences rather than racial differences were the source of humour. It, however, also featured Anglo-Indian actor, Tom Alter, who ironically played the role of a white British writer settled in India.

32 The period also saw more representations of Afro-Caribbean Diaspora in Britain, including controversial *Love Thy Neighbour* (Thames Television for ITV, 1972-75), which, like *Curry And Chips*, pitted racist and anti-racist views against each other to derive humour, *The Fosters* (ITV, 1976-77) the first Black family sitcom on British TV and *Mixed Blessings* (LWT for ITV, 1978-80) which showed the first interracial marriage on British TV (Pines, 1992: 13; Malik, 2002: 97; Duguid Mark, RS).
recently arrived South Asian audience. *Apna Hi Ghar Samajiye* (Make Yourself At Home, BBC, 1965-79) and *Nai Zindagi Naya Jeevan* (New Life, BBC 1968 -82) were programmes dealing with problems Asian immigrants faced in the culture of their new home. They were broadcast in the most spoken language of the subcontinent – Hindustani, a hybrid between Hindi and Urdu (Malik, 2002: 56-57; Casciani, 13th Oct 2005). According to the BBC’s Multicultural Programmes Department, the intention behind the programmes was not just to offer “practical advice” to recently arrived immigrants on how best to find their feet in the new country, but also to maintain an active “link with the subcontinent” (Malik, 2002: 57) instead of severing all ties with the past. This was an early recognition of South Asians in Britain as a diaspora, for whom the homeland would continue to remain an integral part of their identity. Another programme to help in the integration process of South Asians in particular, this time in English was *Look, Listen And Speak* (BBC, 1966). *Parosi* (BBC, 1977-78), written by Dilip Hiro and Naseem Khan and starring actors of South Asian descent like Roshan Seth and Zohra Segal, followed in the same line; however, they combined not just the languages, Hindi and English, but also two genres, drama and talk show style discussions. The number of such programmes that targeted South Asians was much higher than those for the other ethnic minorities in Britain, leading Sarita Malik to observe that, due to the starkly visible differences in culture from the white British mainstream, South Asians were allegedly more in need of ‘integration’. The agenda seemed to be ‘assimilationist’ based on the premise that “any problems that Asian people faced in Britain could be eradicated [by simply converting their] Asianness into Englishness” in spite of BBC’s denial of this intention (2002: 57).

2.3.4.2. Documentary Depiction of Race Issues in Pre- and Post-Powellite Ages

In the area of documentary as well, the issue of race began to be thematised much more frequently than in the previous decades. Following a liberal, social-democratic and pedagogic agenda, the documentary texts of this era attempted to explore the race relations discourse in Britain. In most texts, however, the narrative authority resided with the white voice which spoke about the coloured people, their problems, their cultural difference and their victimisation but hardly ever spoke to them. Coloured voices were rarely heard in such texts and, in spite of the effort to inform the viewers and encourage anti-racist behaviour, the texts pushed them to the
margins by silencing them. An example that actually included South Asian presence and voice in the setting of a studio discussion was _Racial Discrimination_ (ITV, 1967) a part of the series _This Week_. The host, Llew Gardner, greeted the audience at the beginning of the show saying: “Good evening, I’m White. Most of you watching this programme are also White, which, the way things are in this country, is fortunate for us” (as quoted in Malik: 2002, 40). This was followed by a prompt question directed to the South Asian guest in the studio: “I would like to ask Mr. Nandy, what it’s like to be a coloured man living in this country of ours?” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 40). Mr. Nandy, among other coloured voices, was given a chance to express his opinion. But soon enough, his statement about his experience was laid out in a field for contestation, where fellow white guests delivered their ‘expert’ opinions. Martin Jukes, from the Engineering Employers’ Federation highlighted the difficulty faced by employers who hired coloured workers for their factories. Henry Bonham Carter, who was then the Chairman of the Race Relations Board, noted: “Perhaps, it is worth remembering that things aren’t as bad in this country as they are in some other countries” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 40). This patronising statement, which calls for gratitude on the part of coloured immigrants, in conjunction with another expert opinion that stated “[a] lot is said to be prejudice that is nothing of the kind” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 40), shifts the focus from the experiences of racism narrated by the coloured guests in the studio, relegating them to the margins, to the white expert opinions on the issue of race which preside over the centre.

Another documentary film of the 60s focusing on British South Asians in particular was _Asian Teenagers_ (BBC, 1968). Concentrating on the differences in culture and the theme of ‘integration’, this documentary was “predicated on the myth that there ever was a definable and homogenous British or Asian ‘way of life’, this trajectory accommodated a new set of myths designed for Asians – as overly moral, oppressive (men)/oppressed (women), alien, confused and negatively bound by close knit family structures” (Malik, 2002: 43). The commentary, informing viewers of the goings-on in Southall’s South Asian community, used phrases like “repugnant to most English people ...Victorian is an apt description of Asian attitudes to family life and Dickens would have understood why these Muslim girls work all hours in their fathers’ restaurant kitchens” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 43), reinforcing stereotypes that went beyond qualifying South Asians as alien but as primitively so. Interviewing several British South Asian
teenagers about their cultural heritage in an effort to authenticate the claims made in the text, the judgement passed on the cultural difference as “odd and even audacious” rested solely in the hands of the white commentator, who represented in contrast the ‘normal’ and the ‘universal’ (Malik, 2002: 44). As in the case of Racial Discrimination, the presence of coloured voices in this text did not deter it from being prejudiced. For Stuart Hall, these documentaries of the Pre-Powell age embody “inferential racism” (1981: 37) which is based on the normative status of the presupposition that the white race is superior to all others. He cites the example of The Question Of Immigration, broadcast as a part of BBC’s Great Debate, and concludes that the programme was racist because of the logic of the argument, which happens to pre-empt Enoch Powell’s famous campaign for repatriation: “immigrants=blacks=too many of them=send them home” (1981: 46).

In the light of Powell’s campaign, especially following his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, “the media [in its extensive coverage across various genres] presented itself as straddling the middle ground by merely relaying the views of a generally respected and intellectual Conservative politician to the public” (Malik, 2002: 46). An example of such a text was The Great Debate – Enoch Powell and Trevor Huddleston (LWT for ITV, 1969). The numerous broadcasts that revolved around the question raised by Powell maintained an almost eerie neutral tone, “tak[ing] on largely a non-evaluative position” about the subject (Malik, 2002: 46), whereas examples cited here from the pre-Powell television coverage of topics related to immigration and race had not refrained from passing judgement.

Although the trend of social-democratic, liberalist documentary filmmaking around the thematic of race relations, which “set out to ‘explain’ various aspects of immigrant life in Britain [where] Blacks and immigrants (invariably Asians at the time) had [...] become a ‘problem’” (Pines, 1992: 12) dominated the 70s, the end of the decade also saw some breakthroughs, especially with coloured writers and directors (mostly, however, of Afro-Caribbean descent, e.g. Melenik Shabazz (Breaking Point, ATV for ITV 1978)) participating in production. In addition, there came an increasing awareness of the power of television, in particular, in forming opinions, especially in the wake of the extensive television coverage of Powell’s campaign. The result was what came to be known as ‘access’ slots in television jargon or providing airtime to political and social campaigns, a policy adopted by the BBC’s Community Programme Unit established in
1972. One of the first programmes to apply this policy was *Open Door*, later called *Open Space*, on BBC in 1973. With democratic intentions at heart the programme provided airtime to extreme right organisations who produced, for example, the edition *British Campaign To Stop Immigration* (1976) on the one hand, and on the other, to minority communities who sought representation and had not had chances to be heard. An example of the latter was the edition called *Southall On Trial* (1979), a documentation of the Southall riots of 1979 produced by The Southall Defence Committee, depicting a version of the events that provided a different perspective from that of the official narrative (Malik, 2002: 48, 49). Another groundbreaking edition was *It Ain’t Half Racist, Mum* (1979), produced by Campaign Against Racism in the Media, which questioned the role of media in propagating racism. Stuart Hall, who co-presented this edition, describes it as “a programme about the media and racism, on the media, against the media” (1981: 47).

**2.3.4.3. The British South Asian Detective of the 70s**

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, the actual presence of South Asian faces on Britain’s television landscape was minimal and could be neatly restricted to the first few instances of BBC’s efforts in multicultural programming and documentary features. The fictional genres, like the sitcoms, used white actors ‘blacked-up’ to play the South Asians, and some token South Asians were a part of the general setting in dramas to give a multicultural appearance (Malik, 2002: 136). It was only in the late seventies that a significant change occurred with the representation of South Asians in the mainstream television genre of crime fiction. *Gangster* (BBC, 1976-78), first produced as *Play For Today* (BBC, 1975), was further developed into two series of six episodes each and featured the first British Pakistani protagonist in a mainstream TV series according to the *Radio Times* of September 1976. (*Gangsters of Boom Town, 1989: 71*) Khan, the undercover agent, played by Ahmed Khalil, works together with the other leading character, Kline, played by Maurice Colbourne, who is an ex-gang leader recently released from prison, to uncover Birmingham’s underworld nexus. This nexus consists of competing gangs of different ethnic origin, intentionally moving away from an all-white depiction of the Midlands city. David Rose, the producer of the series, acknowledged this change and the need to depict it: “Look at the tower blocks, the mixture of races in the streets. There is a difference in the air”
(Gangsters of Boom Town, 1989: 72); therefore, the multi-ethnic cast consisting of actors of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean descent as well as white Britons. Even thematically it deals with issues of immigration, where all groups resort to scams to make their profits by smuggling illegal immigrants. In the first series, as Richard Paterson puts it, the ethnically different characters act initially as “representatives of [their] racial groups” (Patterson, 1989: 74), in the process slipping into stereotypes, “occasionally portraying Indians as servile, black men as thugs and white males as culturally unaware” (Collinson). In fact when the Play For Today was broadcast in January 1975, it created huge agitation in the media over the use of racist stereotypes. However, with time, the initial critics “slowly began to adjust their perception of the play, accepting that racist characters did not make the programme inherently racist” (Collinson) and as Paterson notes, especially, in the second series other textual aspects of film-making took over (1989: 74-75).

2.3.5. Representation of South Asians in British Cinema of the 60s and the 70s

As in television, cinema did not see much representation of the South Asian diaspora in Britain. Films in the tradition of the Empire films continued, for which British India provided the setting, the most famous being Carry On Up The Khyber (Gerald Thomas, 1968). As a part of the popular Carry On Series, comedy films produced by Peter Rogers, the film offered a spoof of earlier colonial films. The plot of this film revolves around the efforts of a Scottish regiment of the British Army to protect the Khyber Pass from local rebellion and in this setting it parodies attitudes popularly associated with the British, among them “restraint and decorum and the associated obsession with class values” (Angelini). Although it turns the tables on British heroism and candour, a theme many earlier colonial films celebrated, Carry On Up The Khyber uses techniques similar to these earlier colonial films in its production. Shot entirely in Britain,

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33 Issues of race were also being explored in British cinema, though basically concentrating on the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain. In fact, as early as 1959 films Sapphire and Look Back In Anger, which were to be followed by Flame In The Streets (1961) thematised race relations in Britain. These films, however, could be read as results of anxiety felt by white Britons, in the face of large-scale coloured immigration. Pines points out that the films in the guise of “liberal humanist pleas for racial tolerance” (Pines, 2001: 179), represent blacks as either ‘victims’ or ‘social problems’. Both roles highlight white anxiety, which is not shown as a product of “racial prejudice as such” but is “activated as a direct result of encounters with blacks” (Pines, 2001: 179). This leads to the marginalisation of blacks as they pose “a threat to the idealized white family” (Young, 1996: 91) which could in turn be read as a metaphor for the Empire (Young, 1996: 91-92).
the film is supposed to represent the northern borders of British India. Furthermore, it also uses the practice of ‘blacked up’ white British actors to play South Asian roles (Angelini).

A British actor famously associated with ‘blacking up’ to play roles of South Asians, in this case Indians, in the sixties was Peter Sellers. Two of his films The Millionairess (Anthony Asquith, 1960) and The Party (Blake Edwards, 1967) both comedies, have lead characters of South Asian immigrants, the former set in Britain and the later in Hollywood, US. The Party, although an American production, featured not just a British actor ‘blacked up’ as an Indian, but was thematically ironic, in so far as it depicted the struggles of an Indian in pursuing an acting carrier in Hollywood, playing roles in colonial adventures. The slapstick humour is generated through the exaggerated stereotypical characterisation of Hrundi V. Bakshi, who finds himself in awkward situations in a culturally different land.

The Millionairess tells the story of an Indian Dr. Ahmed el Kabir (Peter Sellers) in London who eventually falls in love with his rich patient, Epifania Parerga played by Sofia Loren, after rejecting her in the beginning. The story of Epifania’s pursuit of Dr. Kabir, while bringing out sets of clichés revolving around the West, as industrial, progress orientated embodied by Epifania, and the East, as its spiritual counterpart also at the same time juxtaposing traditional gender roles, with the romantic woman and the practical man, does little to question them. Though the issue of race or ethnicity is hardly mentioned in the film and does not appear to be a barrier in the love plot’s success, Dr. Kabir’s character, portrayed by ‘blacked-up’ Peter Sellers does derive from stereotypical attributes, in particular, accent and dress, associated with people from the subcontinent. The choice of naming the popular British South Asian sitcom of the 90s after the title track of the movie ‘Goodness Gracious Me’ therefore is hardly surprising.

2.3.6. First British South Asian Film: A Private Enterprise, 1974

It was only in the mid 70s that a film that would qualify as the first British South Asian full length feature was released. 34 Though directed by a white Briton, Peter Smith, who also worked on popular police procedural series The Sweeney (1975-78), the script was co-authored by Dilip Hiro, a British author of South Asian descent, and depicted the struggle of an ambitious South

34 A number of short films were made in the years prior to the release of A Private Enterprise by British South Asian, British Afro-Caribbean and British African production and direction teams. Noteworthy among these were Jemima And Johnny (1964) made by South African born Lionel Ngakane, and Ten Bob In Winter (1963) made by Llyod Reckord, who was born in Jamaica, but had moved to Britain (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 51-56).
Asian immigrant in Britain, whose ultimate goal is to run a successful business. Produced on a small budget by the British Film Institute, the film, set in the Midlands, had South Asian actor Salman Peer playing the lead role of Shiv Verma, who, though qualified as an engineer, works in the dreary conditions of a dilapidated foundry with his flatmate Ashok, another immigrant from the subcontinent. He has a network of friends and family for whom his dream of being self employed and setting up a workshop to produce plastic trinkets is unacceptable. His uncle, Ramji, who owns a business himself, urges him to buy an existing business, rather than setting one up from scratch. For Shiv, however, this prospect means setting up a sweat shop where other South Asian immigrants work long hours under bad conditions. His uncle’s opinion does not deter Shiv, who takes advantage of the ongoing strike at the foundry to start working on his own project, looking for properties where he could set up his workshop and trying to sell trinkets to locals. In addition, Ramji proposes that Shiv marry the daughter of a London based businessman, Chandra, because of the financial benefits that this marriage could bring. Shiv meets Chandra who appears to be vain and not does share his values, her sole interests in life being shopping and partying. His disdain for Chandra becomes even more intense when he meets Penny, a white British woman, who was born in India. A stereotypical Indophile, who is driven by “clichéd infatuation with a mythical India, rather than by genuine affection for individuals” (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 75), Penny does not fare much better with Shiv, in spite of initial mutual attraction. The film ends on an uncertain note, with Ramji’s death, and Chandra’s father giving Shiv some money. Shiv leaves and the last scene of the film, shows him on a train, a victim of silent racial prejudice, as he tries to make contact with a white baby, whose mother does approve of his affectionate gesture. The open end leaves questions about the future prospects of not just this ambitious young man, but also the larger question of the prospects of entrepreneurial South Asian immigrants of the first generation. It talks of cultural expectations of individuals which may not always be in perfect harmony with the individual’s own dreams and ambitions, a plot conflict that recurs in British South Asian films (Korte, Sternberg: 2004: 74, 75). It thematises racism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, critiques the emerging trend of Indophilia, which is based on the exoticising the country and its people. Though concentrating, thematically, on ways of securing financial success as a means of finding a toehold in a new country, in a large way, the film does depict the intricate differences in the mindsets of people from ‘one’ culture,
through the different perspectives and the variety of views, that characters like Ramji, Kumar and his daughter Chandra, Ashok, Shiv and even the New Age Guru, Penny introduces Shiv to, embody. It essentially takes a genuine common concern of many first generation immigrants from the subcontinent, however diversifies individual approaches to it. Similarly, the open end of the film does not allow any final judgements to be passed; rather it shows the ongoing nature of the process of ‘becoming’ that an immigrant’s identity undergoes, in the face of constantly changing circumstances (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 74-75).  

2.3.7. Multicultural Programming: Changing Television Broadcasting Policy

Research conducted throughout the seventies by organisations like the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Glasgow Media Group, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and the Campaign Against Racism in Media (CARM) had already proven the existence of inequalities in the representation of ethnic minorities in British television. The first efforts to correct these were also being made, as mentioned earlier, by the introduction of access slots. However, these efforts were small scale. By the end of the decade there were talks of making it a serious agenda, to introduce policy changes in the area of broadcasting which would also imply ending discrimination in the area of jobs in the media. And in 1978, the CRE countered the government’s White paper on ‘Broadcasting’ by making the obvious connection between the prevailing race relations in the country and the inequalities in representations of coloured people in media. The idea of the medium as public service broadcasting, the founding tenet of British television, was challenged, on the basis that the public that it referred to did not include coloured citizens of the nation. It argued that the nation comprised of more than one group of people, namely white Britons, that it was heterogeneous, thus “position[ing] television as a central player in the shifting political discourses and ideas around race and nation” (Malik, 2002: 58).

The first major shift resulting from this was that ITV introduced regional franchising, with regional companies now making programmes to target their local audiences. In London, which had a substantially large number of coloured residents, for instance, LWT, a company that had been making programmes for ITV, saw a market for programmes for coloured audiences.

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35 1975 saw the release of the much acclaimed British Afro-Caribbean director Horace Ove’s Pressure. The film combines elements of documentary and fictional films with a cast of untrained actors, authentic locations for setting and a story inspired from actual incidents. It has “gained the status of a classic reference film and is commonly acknowledged as Britain’s first full length black feature” (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 56-57).
John Birt, who was then still with LWT, set up the London Minorities Unit (LMU), a group that would produce programmes responding to the needs of minorities in London, including its coloured population. One of their most controversial productions was *Skin* (1980), a series of half hour documentaries thematising Afro-Caribbean and South Asian diasporas in Britain, but according to its executive producer Jane Hewland, equally aimed at White audiences. *Skin* became very controversial, was “criticised for assuming that British Asian and African-Caribbean constituted a politically monolithic Black audience and for following in the mainstream tradition by *explaining* the Black minority to the White majority” (Malik, 2002: 59; italics in original). In spite of this criticism, *Skin* was also considered the first indication that television broadcasting policy, aimed at equal opportunities and fair representation, was being taken seriously by the channels (Malik, 2002: 59).

Further, new pressure groups were organised by coloured media practitioners to ensure the successful application of policies which aimed to include ethnic minority groups. The Black Media Workers’ Association (BMWA) was one such group. Officially founded in 1981, it included both British South Asian and Afro-Caribbean media professionals, who in their first report, suggested that equality in representation would only be achieved if more coloured people became “actually involved in reporting and editing, programme-making and developing images of black people [Asians, Africans and Afro-Caribbeans] for public consumption.” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 60). However, as Imruh Bakari notes in an interview with Sarita Malik, the lack of a clear cut agenda, and the fact that a number of members and supporters of such groups went on to pursue their individual careers, led to their failure. In fact by the early 80s, long running organisations like the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and the Campaign Against Racism in Media had also shut down (2002: 60).

**2.3.7.1. Channel 4 as a Venture to Promote Multicultural Programming**

By the late 70s, given the changing role of television, discussions had begun on the form of a potential fourth channel (to break the dual control of the British television landscape that rested in the hands of BBC and ITV). The Annan Committee, set up to research these possibilities, highlighted in their report that this channel would have to cater to “the competing demands of a society which was increasingly multi-racial and pluralist” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 60). The
result was Channel 4, launched in November 1982 by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The programmes of this channel were to include some made by the existing ITV companies; at the same time the channel would promote independent media workers to ensure a diverse selection overall (Malik, 2002: 60). Pines notes the opportunities Channel 4 offered coloured minorities to help rectify inequalities earlier representations had shown.

It was the first time that a mainstream television channel instituted policies specifically aimed at creating new opportunities of access for, among others, media practitioners. There was also a recognition of the history of racist imagery and the fact that much of it had been racist, which the new channel promised to redress through its commissioning and scheduling policy. There were great expectations following the appointment of the first-ever Commissioning Editor for Multicultural Programmes (Sue Woodford), who had the onerous task of putting the channel’s huge promises into operation (1992: 14).

In spite of the policy to commission independent media practitioners, Channel 4’s first few current affairs programmes targeting coloured communities in Britain, *Black On Black* (1982-85) and *Eastern Eye* (1982-85) were LWT productions, creating a huge uproar from coloured independent media practitioners. The programmes produced by Trevor Phillips and Samir Shah, who had worked on the controversial documentary series *Skin*, encountered further criticism on the grounds that they lumped British South Asian and British Afro-Caribbean communities together, not elucidating the “social and cultural distinctiveness of either community” (Pines, 1992: 15). Farrukh Dhondy, a British South Asian, who replaced Sue Woodford in 1984, did not renew the contract with LWT for these programmes and instead offered independent production companies the opportunity to produce them. One of the first programmes to replace the LWT productions was from Bandung Production (led by British South Asian Tariq Ali and British Afro-Caribbean Darcus Howe), *The Bandung File* (1985-89), thematically related to current affairs, co-produced by Dhondy himself. This programme “spanned a range of subjects from international affairs (*President Nyerere in Conversation with Darcus Howe and Tariq Ali*, 1985), to the arts (*Profile of Vikram Seth*, 1986; *Linton Kwesi Johnson In Concert*, 1985), to home affairs affecting Black Britons (*Till Death Us Do Part-Labour And The Black Vote*, 1985)” (Malik, 2002: 63).

Apart from documentary current affairs programmes, the genre of drama and sitcom also saw a rise in representation of coloured British citizens with rise in multicultural programming, which eventually spread to the other channels.
2.3.7.2. British South Asian Sitcom of the 80s: *Tandoori Nights* (Channel 4, 1985-87) 36

Written by Farrukh Dhondy, *Tandoori Nights*, the first British South Asian sitcom, tells the story of Jimmy Sharma (Saeed Jaffery) and his family, who own a restaurant called ‘The Jewel in the Crown’, which finds itself in constant competition with the next door ‘Far Pavilion’. 37 Although using the restaurant situation might be considered in many ways a stereotypical and essentialist representation of British South Asians, and in conjunction with the servility of certain characters like the waiter and chef, may be criticised for resorting to clichés, the series does explore the heterogeneous nature of British South Asian identity, especially in the characters of Jimmy and his daughters. Jimmy who is described by Malik as an “unctuous, conniving businessman” 38 (2002: 99), for whom climbing the social ladder is of utmost significance, could be understood as a product of the Thatcherite era, in which the sitcom is set, instead of a reductionist characterisation which relies on stereotypes. His daughters, are “left wing sexy women” (Chanda, TN) who do not follow, as John Naughton writing for *The Listener* observes, the normative expectations of submissive daughters of South Asian origin (1989: 53). These non-normative depictions have provided other points of critiques of the sitcom, as presenting the South Asian diaspora in Britain as “assimilated”, not being culturally ‘pure’ enough to provide for “more original material”, observes Peter Lennon (1989: 52). However, these critiques rest heavily on the multiple levels of reading the ambivalent text offers viewers. *Tandoori Nights*, although targeted towards a British South Asian audience, was eventually also viewed by white viewers who might not have recognised the source of humour in ironies that the text offers, and regarded them as a reaffirmation of their beliefs (Malik, 2002: 100). With regard to South Asian viewers, Malik notes that these ironies that produced humour went unnoticed in many cases too; the general criticism was that the text did not provide an ‘accurate’ depiction, as the series resorted to stereotypes and did not seek to “wipe out the whole history in misrepresentation” (2002: 100). The numerous controversies surrounding the sitcom finally deemed it as

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36 *Tandoori Nights* was also broadcast on India’s national channel Doordarshan in the late eighties.
37 The names of the two restaurants could be understood as an ironic inversion of colonial paradigms of representation through inter-textual references, as they are the names of two TV miniseries produced in the previous year 1984, set in British India and pertaining to the genre of Empire films.
38 Saeed Jaffery’s character in *Tandoori Nights* has similarities with the character he plays in the 1985 film *My Beautiful Launderette*, the later being one of the highly acclaimed characterisations that mark a turning point in the history of representations of British South Asians, moving away from the essentialised notion of identity towards a more heterogeneous conception of cultural identity (Chanda, TN).
unlaughable, which led to its early demise (Malik, 2002: 100; Chanda, TN). In spite of this, the sitcom is still known for its showcasing of British South Asian talent, with the launch of Meera Syal as script-writer, and famous actors like Saeed Jaffery (Chanda, TN).


Another remarkable trend that the early years of the 80s witnessed was a resurgence of television dramas and films set in the British Empire, specifically in British India. Among them were Richard Attenborough’s Oscar winning Gandhi (1982), James Ivory’s Heat And Dust (1983), David Lean’s A Passage To India (1984) and the TV dramatisations The Far Pavilions (Channel 4, 1984) and The Jewel In The Crown (ITV, 1984). The nostalgic perspective of these screen fictions view the Empire through the lens of Thatcherite era, where newer ideas of Britishness were being explored and the Falklands War had been fought to save the last shreds of the Empire.

In both the films and the TV serials, orientalist discourses perpetuate the discourses of the East [British India and its inhabitants] as exotic and dangerous, simultaneously threatening and attractive, spiritual yet uncivilised and, ultimately, as a geographical space, culture, civilisation, constructed as the West’s [Britain’s and its white population’s] ‘Other’ (Aldea, 2009: 429-430).

Not entirely ‘restorative’39, this nostalgia did, to some extent, question the imperial ideology and the racist cultural hierarchies which were the foundation of it. These films attempt to problematise the notion of Empire, most remarkably by presenting a white female experience of the Empire,40 in contrast to earlier white male colonial adventure films.41 Such representations often result in love plots with colonised coloured males, hence thematising miscegenation, the driving force of all colonial ideology. This forbidden inter-racial romance meets the disapproval

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39 Svetlana Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia in her work the Future of Nostalgia (2001). The first is what she calls “restorative nostalgia”, a kind of nostalgia, so engrossed in the authenticity of the past, that it “characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in antimodern myth-making by means of return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories” (41). In contrast there is what she calls “reflective nostalgia”, which by reflecting on the “imperfect process of remembrance” (41), could provide a critical perspective from which to view the past.

40 With the exception of Gandhi (1982)

41 With the exception of Black Narcissus (1947), discussed previously, which also depicts a female experience of Empire, but does not create an inter-racial love plot, its female characters being nuns and thus any form of romantic sexual relationship being taboo.
of the negatively characterised patriarchal colonising white male, who ultimately crushes it to reassert the colonial hierarchy, is a theme running through most of these texts. Again, most of these female characters are “troubled” (Aldea, 2009: 440), and are dealt with utmost cruelty through the storylines. Further, there is a significant silence of the colonised coloured female, who is relegated to the margins of the texts in stereotypically passive roles (Aldea, 2009: 440).

Speaking, in particular, of The Jewel In The Crown, which has been praised for its ‘authenticity’ in the depiction of the last years of the British Raj while criticising its imperial ideology, Sarita Malik notes the problems of this seemingly ambivalent ‘liberal’ text:

Jewel was indeed classically liberal (appearing to address a moral race issue and include Black [Asian] characters), but like the social-conscience discourses of the 1950s and 1960s, it also dominantly excluded a significant Black narrative presence (that is, it spoke on the behalf of the ‘Other’). This was arguably a difficult gap to bridge within the recreated setting of colonialism where Black people were silenced ‘in real life’, but the trick of the series was in how it managed to locate itself within the ideologies of broad-mindedness, non-conformism and anti-Thatcherism, whilst also doing nothing to tell us anything oppositional, challenging, or otherwise about a silenced colonial experience. In fact, through its extreme nostalgia, Jewel facilitated a rearticulation of the discourse of colonialism, English nationalism and social Whiteness and as such, acted as sedation prescribed to move but not, in any real sense, disturb its very multi-racial audience. In terms of Jewel’s liberal effects then, it is worth asking liberal to whom, by whose standards and in comparison to what? Jewel was certainly hooked up in these liberal complexities (2002: 144).

In the character of Hari, played by Art Malik, the series shows a ‘good’ Indian, who is represented in much more complexity than previous depictions of Indians, in fact, representing what Homi Bhabha suggests as a condition of the colonial subject in his essay Of Mimicry and Man (1994: 121-131), as the play between similarity and difference with the Coloniser. Hari verbalises this intricate and complex idea, when he talks of his own condition: “I hate it- India. I hate all the beggars and the heat and the bugs and most of all myself for being Black and English” (The Jewel, Episode 1)42. The remark also brings to mind the complexities of identity of the contemporary British South Asian diaspora, being in-between two cultures. In being liberal the series pits this good Indian character against Ronald Merrick, the evil Coloniser, which, however, is only one of many representations of white imperialism in the text. The central characters, as mentioned earlier, are female, namely Daphne Manners and Sarah Layton, and depict another point of view. They represent another voice, another ‘liberal’ voice, as they

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42 The quote from The Jewel In The Crown (The Jewel) are self-transcribed and from the DVD.
“express disapproval of British practice in India, though always at the level of how Indians are treated rather than whether they should be treated at all; they criticize the conduct of the empire, not the enterprise itself” (Dyer, 1997: 186). They, in their interactions with Indians, are shown as the benevolent superior; they smile at them, help them and educate them. This gaze might be ‘liberal’ in its ‘kindness’ but still implies colonial hierarchies (Malik, 2002: 145).

2.3.9. Landmark British South Asian Films of the 80s

Unlike other European television channels of the time, Britain’s three channels and the productions companies affiliated to them had not been yet involved in productions of feature films which would not just be broadcast on TV but have a big screen release. In November 1982 as Channel Four was launched, Jeremy Issacs, the Chief Executive, mentioned plans for the launch of Film on Four, which started as an initiative to promote independent production companies from all around the world. This offered an opportunity to many Black British and among them British South Asian filmmakers who were able to fund their productions with financial aid from the channel (Malik, 2002: 156-157). Further, as the struggle for fair representation in media continued, many coloured film makers joined forces to set up collectives and workshops, which would aid their productions. The first British South Asian collective and workshop, Retake, established in 1984, helped produce, together with Channel 4 and Greater London Council, Ahmed Jamal’s first feature film Majdhar (1984) (Chanda, M). The film thematises two distinct experiences, that of a British South Asian, and that of a recent South Asian immigrant, in the stories of Afzal (Tony Wredden) and Fauzia (Rita Wolf), a couple whose marriage fails because of these differences in identity. Afzal who has been in Britain longer and is a British citizen, is caught between two cultures, and tries to come to terms with his cultural origins by marrying a Pakistani woman, Fauzia. However, due to the differences in their personalities and their understanding of sexuality, where Fauzia is not comfortable with “western codes” (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 77) Afzal has an affair with a white woman, Sandra, who seems to be “the genuine article” for him (Chanda, M). They separate shortly after the wedding, and Fauzia decides to stay on in Britain, instead of going back to Pakistan as her husband wishes. Making the decision to abort her unborn child and look for work, with the help of her South Asian friends, Fauzia begins a process of transformation, not just external (she starts dressing in
western clothes) but also a change in her identity depicted in the letter she writes to her sister, a letter that is read out to the viewer by means of a voice over. “Something strange has happened to me. I suddenly feel free and I am not afraid or self-conscious when I go out. People here are too busy or preoccupied to even notice me” (as quoted in Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 78). She then begins a relationship with a white man, who, however, disappoints her, as his attraction to her is based on the same principle of “philo-ethnic attachment” that is also depicted in A Private Enterprise, discussed earlier (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 79). Afzal, when he sees Fauzia again, congratulates her on becoming a ‘Londoner’ (Chanda, M; Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 81).

Thematising aspects of gender, body, race, ethnicity and culture, the film, according to Sarita Malik, breaks with general stereotypes concerning South Asians in Britain. But Malik adds that in trying to follow the social-realist tradition of the director’s earlier short films (2002: 164), the film reduces the complex nature of identities and seems to carry the message of assimilation (1996: 208).

Probably the most discussed of British South Asian films of the 80s is My Beautiful Launderette (1985) written by Hanif Kureishi and directed by Stephen Frears. The plot, set in the context of Thatcher’s regime, depicts in the story of the protagonist Omar, a British South Asian. It thematises all kinds of binary oppositions arising from issues of race, culture, sexuality, class, etc., and deconstructs the notion of an essentialised British South Asian identity. It depicts this identity as complex and multifaceted, not always representable as a coherent whole (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 85). The film, which was produced by Channel 4, received mixed reviews, some like Ghani praising it for representing the ambivalence in identities. “What My Beautiful Launderette was able to do is mark a moment in which the South Asian identity was revealed as contradictory and paradoxical” (as quoted in Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 83). On the other hand, the film also was criticised for representing South Asians in a ‘negative’ light concentrating thematically on sex and drugs, or in the opinion of Keith Vaz, the film depicted only the affluent sections of British South Asian communities, completely neglecting the poor workers, who had to struggle for a daily living (Malik, 1996: 209). The variety of responses from within the British South Asian community that this film induced, confirmed the presence of a “heterogeneous audience” which in turn also confirmed the diverse and plural identities that the film thematically set out to represent (Malik, 1996: 209). Further, it indicated an overcoming of the attitude among
coloured media practitioners that all self representations of coloured people had to be ‘positive’, making the visual media (including cinema) in the words of Kobena Mercer “a crucial area of cultural contestation” (as quoted in Malik, 1996: 209). The other film with a character constellation of a British South Asian male protagonist and his white British wife was *Samie And Rosie Get Laid* (1988), written also by Hanif Kureishi, which also followed in the vein of *My Beautiful Launderette*, destabilising notions of fixed British South Asian identities. It also cast Meera Syal and Ayub-Khan Din, both of whom were to become major British South Asian media personalities (Korte, Sternberg, 2004: 82).

A film that received comparatively much less critical attention is *A Kind Of English* (1986) directed by Ruhul Amin, which went against the grain of a social realist narrative mode to capture the complexities of the ‘in between’ experience of a Bangladeshi family in Britain. Using minimal dialogue and letting images do most of the talking, *A Kind Of English* uses a different aesthetic style to explore the diasporic experience (Malik, 1996: 208).

### 2.3.10. Race Related Discourses in Television of the 90s

Multicultural programming in the 90s saw a continued effort at representation of coloured ethnic minorities including British South Asians in all genres of television across the British channels. However, two very different discourses can be identified running parallel to each other, when these representations are considered. The first of these involved the medium of television, becoming a culturally more plural space, allowing for ever increasing self-representations of coloured ethnic minorities. The second saw a persistence of racialised representations in the form of programming that, though sometimes in the guise of the multicultural agenda, had the same liberal, social democratic, almost pedantic, and sometimes even nostalgic tone to them (Malik, 2002).

#### 2.3.10.1. Television Documentaries of the 90s

The nineties saw a major shift in the style of documentaries, with the recognition that television was ultimately governed by economic forces, and therefore commercial success through appealing to viewers’ taste was fundamental to successful broadcasting. Documentaries became more leisure-oriented, rather than having a strict educational mission, using hybrid formats
combining elements of travel shows, cooking shows and documentaries, to narrate a more personal story focusing on “personal identities, talk, consumerism, lifestyle and characters” (Malik, 2002: 51). Among the celebrities featured in this new innovate style of documentation on Channel 4 was British-born music icon, Apache Indian in a series called *Apache Goes Indian* (1995), which documents Apache Indian’s travels in India. BBC featured Madhur Jaffery in *Madhur Jaffery’s Flavours Of India*. BBC, in fact, had set up the Mosaic project as an initiative of BBC TV Continuing Education and Training, in 1989, which then became the origin of documentary programmes like *Black And White In Colour* (1992) directed by Issac Julien, recounting the history of the representation of coloured people on British television. It also led to the production of *Birthrights* (1991-1993), a programme that discussed culture and identity from the perspective of the coloured ethnic minorities and hence successfully incorporated their narratives into the mainstream narrative of British identity. Celebrated British South Asian director, Gurinder Chadha’s documentation on the life of the older generations of South Asian diaspora in Britain who settled in Southall, *Acting Our Age* (1992) was also a part of this initiative (Malik, 2002: 52).

Nevertheless, the decade also saw a strand of documentaries that followed the liberal social-democratic agenda that, concentrating on social problems, carried an undertone of ‘social whiteness’. As investigative journalistic texts, where research and production was allocated to coloured people, arguably under the presumption that they were better qualified to research these topics because of their racial and ethnic background and also lend an air of authenticity to the entire debate, they renewed the discourse of “Blacks-as-social-problems” (Malik, 2002: 53). Among them the most controversial appears to be *Underclass In Purdah* (1993) produced as a part of the BBC series *Panorama*, and by a team made up almost entirely of coloured people. Concentrating on British South Asians from Pakistan and Bangladesh, the documentary set out to investigate their “double marginalisation” – “their vulnerable class status and their ‘specific’ ethnicity and religion (Islam)” (Malik, 2002: 53). Looking at Manningham in particular, a town near Bradford considered by the makers to be representative enough for the large British Muslim

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43 Social Whiteness as Malik describes it, is a phenomenon based on the “presumption that the racial characteristics of Whiteness are unobvious and thus ‘belong’ unproblematically (at least in terms of race) to society”, which in the discourse of audio-visual media accounts for the “hegemony” of Whiteness because of its ‘normality’, and therefore relegates coloured people, precisely because of their colour which acts as a marker of difference, to the margins (2002: 179).
population, the documentary consisted of a series of “illicit images (drugs, prostitution, family violence, battered women)” which were juxtaposed with expert opinions of “official’ spokespeople” as well as a narrative voice tying the interviews and the pictures together (Malik 2002: 53). The commentary stated: “Those not looking for girls in Manningham are usually looking for drugs”, going on to describe, in most generalising terms, how “[m]ost Asian-Muslim families prefer to leave the British way of life outside the front door” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 53). The interviewees included a pimp, who claimed “[m]ost of the girls are run by Asians you know – they’re all Asians – all the Asians are mixed up in drugs and you know gambling and all sorts of things really” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 53)44, a cricketer and politician from Pakistan, Imran Khan, who in Malik’s words, was supposed to represent the expert opinion of a “professional Pakistani” (2002: 53), Tariq Madood, a British Pakistani academic, some white police men, and a female victim (Malik, 2002: 53). The ambivalence that might have been created by the varying opinions of these ‘experts’ was then completely destroyed by the narrative voice taking over in the end and stating rather matter-of-factly: “In many ways, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis find themselves in a worse position than when they first arrived in Britain 30 years ago […] Muslim Asians are now asking themselves how they got into this position when other ethnic groups are doing so much better” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 53). The British Muslims of South Asian origin were no more the victims; they had become the ones to blame for the problems they faced (Malik, 2002: 54).

The Salman Rushdie affair brought British Muslims further into focus in the media, more often than not representing them as “the ethnic Folk Devils” (Malik, 2002: 54; italics in original). The racial and ethnic discrimination that earlier texts had carried, was now replaced by differentiation on the basis of cultural and religious backgrounds with the result that Islam was

44 A similar pattern can be identified in one of the latest episodes of BBC 1 police procedural Silent Witness (Series 15, Episode1- “An Then I Fell in Love”, broadcast in two parts in Aug, 2012) The plot features a group of British South Asian male criminals, who seduce young white women, use drugs to render them helpless, rape them and then pimp them to fellow members of the community, on grounds that white girls do not have morals. This representation is balanced by the inclusion of two other ‘good’ British South Asian characters, one a police officer and the other the step-father of one of the victims (played by Sanjeev Bhaskar). The latter of these figures is first a suspect in the investigation of the rape of his daughter, but later cleared. In the end he avenges the death of his daughter, by taking the law into his own hands by brutally murdering the gang leader. (Dhillon Kashyap also mentions drug trafficking as a common association with British South Asians in his 1998 article Locating the Asian experience (221), cited at length further in section 3.1.)
reduced to a homogeneous Other, characterised by fundamentalism. Malik summarises this development post-Rushdie affair as follows:

The typical media response to this ‘religious fundamentalism’ was a more widespread ‘liberal fundamentalism’; defining how we were to arrive at our judgement of all Muslims - except of course Salman Rushdie (and other media elites such as Tariq Ali and Farrukh Dhondy), who was now in the safe hands of Western liberalism and fair-mindedness. The boundaries between religion, culture, politics and history, and ‘Muslim Pride’ and ‘fanaticism’ were collapsed into one. Television news provided very little thoughtful analysis and made a series of generalised assumptions that all British-Muslims supported Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa. Such discrimination had very real, local effects on everyday lives of many British-Muslims, who had to deal with this new burden of purportedly unassimilable difference (2002: 54; italics in original).

The 1997 discussion around the beheading of two British nurses who had been accused of murder in Saudi Arabia, which received much media attention, showed unmistakably anti-Muslim prejudice. ITV’s studio discussion on the subject on Thursday Night Live (25.9.1997) did not make generalisations on the subject of Islamic law and culture, but confused the former with the state law in Pakistan, and in addition juxtaposed images of the Koran with Muslims brandishing their swords to create a sensational scandal. BBC also had a special edition on the subject in Panorama in May 98. Here the “the Saudis were depicted according to the nurses’ anecdota’ evidence and claims of sexual harassment” (Malik, 2002: 54).

2.3.10.2. Television Drama in the 90s
Like documentaries, television drama also witnessed two divergent trends. For one, in the spirit of multiculturalism, more mainstream dramas started including coloured characters. The genre of soap opera particularly tried to attract minority audiences by including characters from ethnic minorities. EastEnders (BBC, 1985- present) the most popular soap opera on British television, for instance, already included their first British South Asian characters in the plot – shopkeepers Naima Jeffery and her husband Saeed, played by Shreela Ghosh and Andrew Johnson – in the year they started broadcasting. The representation of South Asians, however, was not just stereotypical in the sense of equating being of South Asian descent with shopkeeper, it also seemed at this point very one-dimensional and almost tokenist (Buckingham, 1989: 152). Shreela Ghosh expresses her experience of playing this character: “I keep playing the scenes week in and week out which have no substance, and I don’t think they’ve successfully merged Naima into the
series. I’m underused and undervalued” (as quoted in Buckingham, 1989: 128). The 90s however brought a change, with the introduction of the Kapoors, Geeta (Shobhu Kapoor) and Sanjay (Deepak Verma) to EastEnders’ Albert Square neighbourhood, bringing a greater effort at developing British South Asian characters. Though their storyline seemed well established and integrated in the overall plot of the soap, Malik notes that their representation had a tendency to be restricted to the outdoor ‘public spaces’ like the pub, market or street. Little attention was paid to their ‘home’ or to the South Asian aspects of their identities, like clothes, language, food, etc. This trend was a common feature in representation of coloured people in television drama, signifying, in her opinion, the presence of a barrier which was still to be overcome on the road towards non-racialised representations. The depiction of home or the private sphere would entail showing more intimate aspects of identities of coloured minorities, with more focus on their cultural distinctiveness, the ‘difference’ probably being too stark for the mainstream white audience to accept. The play between similarity and difference seemed to pose a problem in the representation of coloured ethnic minorities (2002: 148-149).

The 90s also witnessed the first British South Asian soap, Family Pride (Channel 4, 1991-93), written by Mahmood Jamal and Barry Simmers, set in Birmingham with a plot revolving around the lives of three families of South Asian origin. However, it did not succeed “to pick up the momentum of ‘mainstream’ soaps” and saw an early demise (Malik, 2002: 148).

Apart from the genre of soap opera, the decade saw a continued effort at multicultural programming with television dramatisations like that of Hanif Kureishi’s The Buddha Of Suburbia (BBC, 1993) and Turning World (Channel 4, 1997), which was produced by Mahmood Jamal and featured leading British South Asian actors, like Roshan Seth, Art Malik and Parminder Nagra.

Other dramas featuring actors of South Asian origin that stood out, and went beyond mere tokenist representation, were the multi-ethnic The Life (BBC, 1996-97) and Holding On (BBC, 1997). Malik notes that Holding On, which won the 1998 BAFTA award for Best TV Serial, had “a convoluted narrative structure designed to ‘reflect life at breaking point’ in contemporary London [representing] the inescapable connections between ‘Blackness’, ‘Asianess’ and ‘Whiteness’” (2002: 152). The Life also featured a similar multi-ethnic narrative, with British South Asian actors Amita Dhiri and Amon Tikaram, and went beyond thematising
the problems of race, ethnicity and cultural difference, not making these an issue which resulted in “fully-rounded, credible” protagonists irrespective of their skin colour (Malik, 2002: 152).

Hand in hand with these diverse renderings of British South Asian identities and multi-ethnic Britain, British television showed another discourse that focused exclusively on Whiteness. Part of this discourse was implicated through the surge in the number of costume dramas like *Middlemarch* (BBC, 1994), *Pride And Prejudice* (BBC, 1995), *Jane Eyre* (ITV, 1997) and *Our Mutual Friend* (BBC, 1998), tinged with a nostalgic air for a time synonymous with the Empire. Other popular texts like *Heartbeat* (ITV, 1992-2010), *Wycliffe* (ITV, 1993-1997), *Peak Practice* (ITV, 1993-2002) and *Inspector Morse* (ITV, 1987-2000), though set in contemporary times, depicted an “idealized, antiquated White rural England”, and yet others were the very successful all white American imports like *Beverly Hills 90210, Friends, Fraiser, Ally McBeal* and *Dawson’s Creek* (Malik, 2002: 153).

2.3.10.3. British South Asian Sitcom of the 90s: *Goodness Gracious Me* (BBC, 1998-2001)

Using the title of Peter Sellers’ promotional song for the movie *The Millionairess* (1960) as its own title, the series *Goodness Gracious Me*, written by Sanjeev Bhaskar and Anil Gupta and broadcast on the BBC, was the first British South Asian sketch show on British television. Known for its comic and yet very ironic portrayal of both British and South Asian stereotypes, the show was highly successful in and outside Britain (Malik, 2002: 102 ). A short analysis of the first episode shows the general pattern the show followed through four seasons.

True to the genre of a sketch show, *Goodness Gracious Me*\(^{45}\) comprises short skits, each dealing with stereotypes. The first episode begins with a short skit of a business meeting set in South Asia where the head of the board introduces a new colleague from England – “Jonathan”. The highly exaggerated stereotypical Indian accent and the total incapability on the part of the South Asians to pronounce the name of the new colleague correctly, often converting it into South Asian names, together with small puns on stereotypical gestures typically associated with South Asians, and the gentleness of the white Briton, ensures laughter from the audience. At the same time, the slapstick nature of the comedy makes the portrayal of such stereotypes highly ironical. For instance, the head of the board's statement about “hard to pronounce foreign names”

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\(^{45}\) All quotes from *Goodness Gracious Me (GGM)* are self-transcribed and from the DVD.
(GGM, Episode 1), which in this skit serves as a reason for giving Jonathan South Asian nicknames, could be understood as directed against the British having trouble pronouncing “long-winded” (GGM, Episode 1) South Asian names. However, the form in which it is said, coming from the mouth of a South Asian, mellows down its intensity, and does not make it sound like an accusation, rather lending it a laughable quality (GGM, Episode 1).

Other satirical skits follow in a similar vein; these deal with other popular aspects of the ‘interaction’ between the majority white Britons and British South Asians. The ‘going for an Indian’ becomes a “going for an English” (GGM, Episode 1), ‘the hottest thing on the menu’ turns into “the blandest thing” (GGM, Episode 1). Even the English restaurant the characters go to, is called “Mountbatten” and is located on “Viceroy Road” (GGM, Episode 1), invoking associations with colonised India. The mimicry here, firstly, is used to deride British imperialism and, secondly, it deals with a new stereotype of (white) Britons – the Friday night ritual of eating curry – by reversing the dynamics of the interaction, and thus satirising it. In addition, this skit also highlights the effects of cultural memory, in this particular case the memory of the era of colonisation, in a representation of British South Asian identity. Though dealing with stereotypes, this particular sequence reveals the complex and ambivalent nature of cultural identities of the South Asian diaspora in Britain.

The series also ridicules the newer emerging stereotypes about British Asians in skits revolving around “Indian wide-boy” (Malik, 2002: 103) who then goes back home to his “bag of mixed pakoras and one CD” (GGM, Episode 1), or the South Asian guru who takes advantage of white people seeking spirituality (GGM, Episode 1). Even the quest for identity is portrayed, when the young Sikh, Hindu and Muslims ask their respective fathers the meaning of their respective religions, with the fathers unable to provide any substantial answer to this query. Read against the backdrop of concerns on rising religious fundamentalism in Britain with regard to ethnic communities, these extremely short skits seem to make fun of the same.

On the surface, these stereotypical representations may appear to be racist and could provoke questions, whether the mere fact of being of South Asian origin justifies making such representations. However, the sheer multitude of stereotypes portrayed and the comic way in which they are constructed reveals the exaggeration which is used in the series as a tool to deconstruct rather than reemphasize them. Moreover, as Sarita Malik points out in her analysis,
the sketch show reflects a sense of humour originating from a “distinctly hybrid British Asian comic register” (2002: 103). This could be seen most clearly in the use of language, an extremely significant facet of identity. The code switching from English to Hindi and Punjabi is a part of almost every skit, and most evident in the song “Kiss my chaddies” (GGM, Episode 1) which takes the English insult and converts it into something new and ridiculously funny. Both cultures seem to be equally present in the sketch show, in its comedy, its characters and its stereotypes and last but not the least in its audience, thus reflecting a synthesis rather than segregation.

2.3.11. The Collaboration of Television and Film: British South Asian Films of the 90s

As in the 80s, when independent films made by British South Asians were produced with Channel 4’s support through the set up Film on Four and also by the BBC, the 90s also saw a number of films produced for both the small and big screens. However, a difference came with changing economic factors affecting audio-visual media in general. As commercial success began to take centre-stage, it forced a budgetary re-assessment from many public institutions and organisations like the BFI and Channel 4 that had hitherto promoted small budget productions of filmmakers belonging to minority groups. Among the many reasons for this development was the establishment of satellite television with its special film channels broadcasting internationally, which proved significant competition to the small-scale, home productions like those backed by and screened on Channel 4. In fact, the pressure resulted in not just a change in agenda and target audience, which now comprised viewers abroad in addition to those at home, but also the establishment of pay channels by Channel 4 itself. Despite these developments and change in focus, many British South Asian filmmakers received funding from Channel 4 to produce their films. However, they were not small-scale productions anymore; instead, they were productions “cross[ing]-over” (Malik, 1996: 215) to target larger, even international audiences, and were commercially driven. It also marked a moment of significant shift in the history of self-representations of coloured Britons including British South Asians in cinema, from those laden with measures to somehow ‘correct’ prior ‘marginalised and racialised’ depictions, to a more diverse exploration of identities which went beyond issues of race, ethnicity and culture. Malik calls this a shift from “cinema of duty” to “cinema of freedom” (1996: 215). Though the shift was not absolute or complete, with films belonging to the prior category still persisting, as
racialised representation also persisted, it was significant, because it marked a step ahead in the politics of representation (Malik, 1996: 215).

Among them the first films were *Wild West* (David Attwood, 1992) and *Bhaji On The Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993). The first narrates the story of a boy of Pakistani descent growing up in Southall, who dreams of being a country musician but is expected to revive Bhangra music. The plot of the latter revolves around a day trip of a group of British South Asian women to the beach in Blackpool, exploring issues of class, generation and gender. Both films go against the notion of essentialised identities, the representations highlighting the multifaceted nature of British South Asians, thematising various factors affecting them. Moreover the films successfully depict cultural hybridity and the position the diaspora occupies – the ‘liminal space’ in between cultures (Bhabha, I, 1994: 5). A scene in the latter film that epitomises this hybridity, is where an elderly British South Asian lady belonging to the group buys chips on the beach, partaking in what might be considered as a popular British tradition, however, sprinkles chilli powder on it before eating them, indulging her subcontinental taste (Malik, 1996: 214). Chadha says with regard to her film:

In *Bhaji* I found emerging ... the pull between a very British film on the one hand and being quite Indian on the other and that pull is present in every scene, every single character, every single frame of the film. ... We as Black people live this duality – this pull – everyday of our lives, but it’s also the force that feeds me as a filmmaker (as quoted in Malik, 1996: 212).

Chadha’s statement reflects Homi Bhabha’s conception of the space ‘in between’ two cultures, as a space filled with creative energy, giving rise to new possibilities (1996: 53-60). *Bhaji On The Beach* exemplifies this, not only in its content, which represents British South Asian identity as multifaceted, but also in its form and style, which could be considered a hybrid of two different aesthetic genres. Malik elaborates: “It is part soap opera, part road movie, part romantic comedy, while also borrowing from the British realist tradition and Bombay popular cinema (particularly *Bajju Bawara* [Vijay Bhatt, 1952], and *Purab Aur Pacchim/ East or West* [Manoj Kumar, 1970])” (Malik, 1996: 212).

With *Bhaji*, Gurinder Chadha, became the first British South Asian woman to direct films, however, she concedes, many institutions in the 90s, in spite of the move towards commercialisation of television and cinema, still expected the work of filmmakers belonging to ethnic minorities to be restricted to the issues of race, ethnicity, culture and discrimination. She
talks of her personal experience of what was expected of her, even after Bhaji’s great success and notes how restricted the projects offered to her were - most of them either “things with Asians in or films about young girls being abused” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 169). Her next film What’s Cooking? (2000) was funded in the US as a result.

A similar difficulty was faced by the team that made East Is East (Dir. Damien O’Donnell, 1998), a film that would eventually have international success. The plot, set in the 70s, telling the story of a British Pakistani family from Salford, dealt with issues of identities, thematising aspects of sexuality, religion and gender, but was considered “too specific” in its audience appeal, representing only a minority group, by the Head of BBC Films unit, David Thompson (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 168). His successor Mark Shivas also had reservations about the success of the film, stating, “this was a very risky project. It was set in the Seventies, it had uncertain international appeal and it had no stars” (as quoted in Malik, 2002: 168).

Nonetheless, the 90s were to see numerous cinematic productions, which would help put British South Asian cinema on the map, “helping to demarginalize (both critically and institutionally) a neglected area of cinema within an already culturally marginalized Black British film sector” (Malik, 2002: 169). Among these productions were Udayan Prasad’s Brothers In Trouble (1995) and My Son The Fanatic (1997; Script Hanif Kureishi), both produced together with the support of the BBC, and Guru In Seven (Dir. Shani Grewal, 1997). The second film will be discussed at length in the next section of this dissertation, as a film dealing with ambivalence of British South Asian identities, particularly relevant in the discourse on British Islam.

The new millennium has brought forth new developments in the field of representations of British South Asians in British audio-visual media, as well as continuing some of the trends witnessed in previous decade. A continuation of the ‘crossover’ films with more popular, mainstream productions, as exemplified by films of British South Asian director Gurinder Chadha, like Bend It Like Beckham (2002), Bride And Prejudice (2004) or the more recent Angus, Thongs And Perfect Snogging (2008) and It’s A Wonderful Afterlife (2010). Many genres of television have also seen a similar continuity of the divergent trends of the 90s when dealing with ethnic minorities, for instance, the 2000s have seen the production of a number of television dramatisations of literary texts like Dickens’s Bleak House (BBC, 2005), Charlotte Bronte’s Jane
Eyre (BBC, 2006) and Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park (ITV, 2007), texts that were not just set in the period of the Empire, but dealt with it thematically too. Dramatisations of contemporary novels by British South Asian writers like Meera Syal’s Anita And Me (BBC, 2002) and Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee (BBC, 2005) continued. Serials set in an all-White rural English landscape have still have a presence in the televisual media landscape for instance The Vicar Of Dibley (BBC, 1994-2007) featuring Dawn French and Heartbeat (ITV, 1992-2010). Following in the tradition of Goodness Gracious Me, new comedy texts like The Kumars At No. 42 (BBC 2, 2001-2006) and Mumbai Calling (ITV, 2009) or the most recent Citizen Khan (BBC1, Episode 1: aired on 27 Aug 2012) were (are being) also developed by British South Asian media practitioners. Many mainstream dramas continue with trends similar to those in the 90s by including various well developed characters of South Asian origin in their plots, for instance soap operas EastEnders (BBC, 1985-present), or Hollyoaks (Channel 4, 1995-present). In addition, the new millennium saw an exponential rise in the popularity of the television genre of ‘Reality TV’. Participants of all ethnic backgrounds can be seen on such shows. The Apprentice (BBC, 2005- present), The X Factor (ITV, 2004-present) and Masterchef (BBC, 1991-present) are all examples of different kinds of competitive reality ‘game’ shows which have contestants from different ethnic backgrounds participating. The focus in these shows lies on the participants’ abilities in the field concerned, business skills in The Apprentice, singing in The X Factor and skilful cooking in Masterchef46, rather than any cultural or ethnic attributes of the contestants.

46 Masterchef has contestants from various ethnic backgrounds who often cook cuisines from their culture, and through this perform their cultural identity. However, judging criteria are taste and skill.
3. Contemporary Discursive Mechanisms in Representations of British South Asian Identities in British Audio-Visual Media

In light of the struggle for representation, described at length in the last chapter, this chapter looks at contemporary popular texts from British television and film discourses in an attempt to answer the very significant question, whether British South Asian identities are still constructed as the Other, as they have been in the past. That identities are theoretically recognised as multifaceted, heterogeneous, and constantly evolving in the postcolonial world does not directly imply that their representations in discourses such as audio-visual media follow suit. The global context created by the popularity of theories like the ‘Clash of the Civilizations’ (Huntington, 1997) and the socio-political developments since 9/11, all point in a different direction – a dichotomous and essentialised understanding of identities based on binaries within a hierarchical power relationship. This is not dissimilar to the relationship between the Coloniser and the Colonised. Analysing both television and contemporary feature films from Britain, this chapter evaluates the texts according to categories in the postcolonial and diasporic concepts of identities elaborated in chapter one to see if racialised practices of representation have indeed been overcome.

3.1. Contemporary Representations of British South Asians in British Television

In his 1988 article, *Locating the Asian Experience*, Peminder Dhillon-Kashyap summarizes the trends in the representation of British South Asians in British television as follows:

British television has been guilty of perpetuating the myths of [South] Asian culture. Countless TV dramas, news items, ‘documentaries’ and magazine programmes have concentrated on the themes of:

- the immigrants – images of Asian women and children with an announcement of the number of immigrants in Britain, to say that they already pose a threat and the numbers will grow in the future.
- the problem – countless programmes have concentrated on Asian people as victims; of racist attacks, of the welfare services, of the concerted campaigns by white parents against Asian dominated schools, and so on. The issues have always been framed to project the affected as the problem.
- the criminals – Asians as drug smugglers and dealers.
- arranged marriages – the media are obsessed with this issue. It is used as an instance of ‘the primitive’ in other cultures.
- assimilation – magazine programmes have concentrated on the educating Asian women into the ‘British’ way of life.
liberation of Asian women – through sexual relationships with white men and through western modes of ‘culture’, while making them victims of patriarchal culture (1988: 122; italics in original).

This evaluation, though, from the 80s, is highly provocative and has an unmistakably accusative tone, which might apply to representations of British South Asian identities even in the contemporary day and age. There have certainly been changes in the arena of these representations, as is noted in the previous chapter; the question however is, in what way and to what extent. The following section concentrates on television texts from all three British terrestrial channels, BBC, Channel 4 and ITV, to analyse the representation of British South Asian identities. It further seeks to identify whether these old trends have perpetuated the contemporary texts, whether and which new trends have emerged. Apart from being popular, the texts are not exclusively made by British South Asians. They belong to various genres, ranging from comedy to drama, police procedural/time travel, reality TV and documentary. Considering representation as a discursive practice and therefore governed by power, this wide spectrum, with regard to selection of material enables a more comprehensive study and provides an insight into the contemporary state of race relations in multicultural Britain.

3.1.1. Subversive Potential of the ‘Liminal’ Space

In the introduction to his book Location of Culture, Homi K. Bhabha borrows Renee Green’s term “liminal space” (1994: 5) to describe the space between the binary designations used to define identity (i.e. attributes of the Self and Other), used to establish hierarchical systems of power. It is this space that provides opportunity for cultural interaction through a “hither thither” movement, “open[ing] up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, I, 1994: 5). The ‘liminal space’ in other words is a zone where cultures meet, interact and influence each other, a space that is filled with creative energy resulting from these dynamics. It is a space where cultural negotiations take place and new meanings are created, and through which stereotypical statuses of cultures with regard to each other in a hierarchical system can be subverted. The following section looks at the representations of this concept of ‘liminal space’ and the opportunities of cross-cultural dialogues that this space provides in two contemporary British South Asian television productions – The Kumars At No. 42 and Mumbai Calling. In both productions, comedy
produced through these cross-cultural interactions is used as a tool with the potential to be highly subversive. The following analyses concentrate on the strategies employed by the texts to deconstruct hierarchies.

3.1.1.1. Interaction of the Fictional with the Non Fictional and Representation of the Hybrid, Non-Essentialised British South Asian Identities: *The Kumars At No. 42* (BBC, 2001-2006) 47

Conceptualised by the makers of the popular British South Asian sitcom, *Goodness Gracious Me*, comprising Richard Pinto, Sharat Sardana and Sanjeev Bhaskar, *The Kumars At No. 42* aired on BBC from 2001-2006. This series, part chat show and part sitcom, explores contemporary British South Asian identities. Through its unique style or format in addition to content, the show reveals the dynamic nature of identities, their ambivalence, their multiple facets, refuting, in the process, any notions of fixed and essentialised identities and hierarchical relationships between them. It centres around a British Indian family living in Wembley, the Kumars, consisting of Sanjeev (Sanjeev Bhaskar), a second generation British Indian who lives at home with his parents, Ashwin (Vincent Ebrahim) and Madhuri (Indira Joshi) who had to elope to London to escape the wrath of Madhuri’s family at their decision to get married. The third member is the witty grandmother Sushila (Meera Syal).

Each episode starts in the format of a sitcom with the fictional characters of the Kumar family, most usually in the living room of the house, preparing for the real life celebrity guests who are to be interviewed. This blends then with the ‘non-fictional’ chat show format, as the guests are unprimed and have to act on cues provided by the fictional characters. After a bit of chit-chat in the living room, Sanjeev as the host of the shortly to start chat show, leaves for the studio, to announce the guest; incidentally the studio has been built by Ashwin who bulldozed Madhuri’s garden at the back of the house. The rest of the family then follow Sanjeev into the studio, where all the family members take part in the subsequent interrogation of the guests, in front of a live audience. The show ends, most often, in the living room returning to the sitcom format. The mixing of genres of sitcom and chat show, and thereby the fictional and non-fictional elements of each, generates multiple levels of meanings in the series. All of these

47 All quotes from *The Kumars At No. 42* (K42) are self-transcribed. The numbering of the episodes in the citations follows the sequence in the DVD.
contribute to its unique character in discourses of media, representations and identities (Dannenberg, 2011: 87).

If understood in Bhabha’s way, *The Kumar’s At No. 42* embodies each and every aspect of the liminal space, through its conceptualisation as a cross-cultural dialogue (very literal, as it is in format part chat show), where tables are turned on the traditionally ‘superior’ white establishment by representatives of a minority ethnic community who have been lower in the hierarchy since the era of colonialism (Dannenberg, 2006: 192).

One of the qualities that facilitate the diverse possibilities of potential subversion of hierarchical relationships based on binary oppositions is the recognition of hybridity – that cultures do not exist in isolation, and interactions between them leave them modified. The recognition of cultural hybridity therefore refutes purist notions of culture and associated essentialised identities. In addition to its format, which blends stylistic elements belonging to traditionally disparate genre, the protagonists, members of a British Indian family, are representatives of hybrid cultural identities. In Sanjeev’s words, “a perfect blend of Indian flavour and British refinement” (*K42*, Episde 6). On several occasions throughout the various episodes the hybrid nature of their identities is highlighted. The first ever Christmas Special of the series is a good example of the way the series incorporates this concept. The Kumars, as their name suggests are traditionally Indian Hindus but celebrate the Christian festival of Christmas. They, however, add an Indian flair to it. The extended family gathers in the Kumar’s living room, waiting for the celebrity guest to arrive. The house is decorated and lit up to make it look festive, causing Ashwin much anxiety as he worries about the electricity bills. In fact, the children of the household decorate the grandmother, Sushila while she is asleep. When scrutinised closely, this scene with Sushila embellished with Christmas decorations, the source of much laughter, is rather interesting. Sushila is the oldest member of the Kumar family, has spent the most time in India, and is the only one who consistently dresses in traditional Indian attire. Her Indian clothes, in this scene, are then decorated with Christmas ornaments producing a funny yet hybrid image of the playful mix of the cultures. Though she then gets rid of most of the ridiculous ornaments while getting ready to go to the studio, she still uses one to tie her hair. In addition, especially for the festive season the family has prepared “festive samosa[s]” (*K42*, Episode 3), a traditional Indian snack, offered to the guests in many previous episodes, but this
time they have a special twist. They are garnished with holly, a traditional though inedible Christmas decoration, as Sanjeev points out, when he offers them to Gary Lineker. The end of the show marks another such moment of hybridity, with Mel B of Spice Girls being invited to sing a traditional Christmas song, however accompanied by a traditional Indian music instrument, a dholki (a small drum). In different aspects that are conventionally regarded as symbolic of culture – attire, food and music – the series highlights the hybrid identity of this family. Language, another factor that is regarded as a significant site of cultural expression, is used to illustrate the hybrid nature of British Indian identities. Though English remains the language used throughout the series, it is often spruced up with words from Hindi and Punjabi. Indian idioms and proverbs are also often used, though translated into English; the translation into a different cultural context often being the source of humour. One such use occurs during the interview with Michael Parkinson when Sushila says in response to Sanjeev’s comment that he does not want to spend the entire evening asking testing questions: “Parki is like a silver-haired mongoose, playing with an overweight cobra” (K42, Episode 1). The use of this common Punjabi proverb and its transfer to a foreign context, using it aptly to describe the situation at hand, is another example of hybridity, the blending of languages and thereby cultures to creatively articulate identity. Though eloquent in English, Sushila often refers to idioms and proverbs of her country of origin, expressing both facets of her identity – British and Indian. The subversive potential of the aspect of hybridity lies in the fact that there is a recognition of diverse ways in which cultures affect each other, the give and take of cultural interaction, and the creative possibilities that are born of this. This recognition rejects purist, simplistic, generalised notions of identities, often expressed in the form of stereotypes.

In addition to representing cultural hybridity, the series, in its representation of British South Asian identities through fictional characters, satirises clichés associated with the British South Asian diaspora. Using the technique of exaggerated repetition of certain stereotypes to create humour, it renders them shallow and devoid of meaning. In the character of Ashwin Kumar, for example, one might recognise a stereotype associated with many entrepreneurial immigrants from the South Asian continent. His business of renting out warehouse space seems to be successful enough to finance his son’s ambitions. He, however, still seems to be constantly looking for ways to cut costs, whether it is asking a relative (cab driver), Devender, who happens
to be an excellent accountant, to do his accounts, or using the chat show to advertise chutney produced by the cameraman, instead of paying them cash (K42, Episode 2). He extends fiscal advice to many celebrity guests, trying to strike deals lucrative to both parties, for instance, offering Fay Ripley the services of his caterer friend for her upcoming wedding (K42, Episode 2). Each episode contains at least one comment or verbal interaction, if not multiple, that brings this character trait of Ashwin to the forefront. On the surface it seems like the character is one-dimensional; however, the exaggeration through the sheer repetition of this one dimension, hints at the superficiality of such stereotypes, making them laughable. The technique is described by Christiana Schlote with regard to other ethnic sitcoms produced for British, American and German television. She examines the sitcom Goodness Gracious Me for similar situations and highlights the subversive potential of exaggerated stereotypes (2005: 177-190). The Kumars At No. 42 goes to the extent of thematising this technique of repetition and exaggeration to create humour in the character of Ashwin’s wife, Madhuri’s consistent repetition of her favourite complaint, the bulldozing her garden to build the studio. Not just is the act of bulldozing a garden an exaggeration, but the sheer number of times the sentence is repeated throughout the series, with the same expression on Madhuri’s face, becomes the source of laughter, rather than of outrage; the original meaning/intention of the sentence seems to be lost.

The Kumars At No. 42, however, does not solely rely on the technique of exaggeration of existing clichés. Quite contrary to Ashwin’s representation is that of Sushila, who flaunts every single cliché traditionally associated with older Indian women. She, in her outward appearance, is very much the traditional Indian grandmother figure, the long silver hair plaits and the traditional pastel Indian attire for a Punjabi woman of that age. However, in her wit, the constant sexual innuendos in her interrogation of the guests, she refutes the image of the quiet, submissive, Indian woman. In the first episode, with Michael Parkinson as a guest, she does not make a secret of her attraction towards him, adorning her cleavage with body glitter to impress him. Later in the episode, in the chat show section, she embarks on a romantic, sexual fantasy involving him and, in the process, forgets what she wanted to initially ask him: “Mr. Parkinson, I know you grew up in the Yorkshire mining village of Grimethrope, the soot from the local coal

48 Devender’s case, an accountant who works as a cab driver refers to the phenomenon of underemployment that many South Asian immigrants to Britain had to face as a result of racism as elaborated in section 2.2.3.2 of this study.
mines clinging to your taut adolescent body. Your lustrous hair ruffled by the breeze, coming of
the Yorkshire moors. I am sorry, I’ve forgotten what I was going to ask” (K42, Episode 1).
Parkinson reacts: “You have been reading D.H. Lawrence” (K42, Episode 1). In another episode
where Gary Lineker is the celebrity guest, she expresses her approval of Gary’s calm nature by
citing her own experience with her husband. “You know, I like submissive men. I like them to
put up a bit of the fight at first and then roll over into the surrender position” (K42, Episode 3).
The blatant sexual innuendos of her comments are not typically associated with Indian women,
especially of her age, who are traditionally not portrayed as expressing sexuality. However she
does this without compunctions (Dannenberg, 2006: 195). Furthermore, she could qualify as the
matriarch of the Kumar family, putting its other members in place, whenever they do not behave
in accordance with her expectations. She criticises Sanjeev often with regard to his questioning
tactics on the chat show, does not always approve of her son Ashwin’s questions, and also fills in
Madhuri on information with regard to the guests. In the episode with Stephen Fry, she shows
yet another facet of her multidimensional personality, least expected if conventional stereotypes
are considered. She shocks everybody by asking Stephen Fry the following question: “Do you
think that naturalists observing sensitive ecosystems are subject to the Heisenberg principle, i.e.
the act of measuring alters the behaviour of the object being measured?” (K42, Episode 6). Using
scientific terminology seems second nature to her, leaving the rest of the family perplexed, she
also goes against the expectations of the audience, who though may have become accustomed to
her witty charm, are once again thrown off their seats, because of blatant violation of stereotypes.

Further moments of subversion are produced due to the innovative format which, as
previously mentioned, blends elements of fiction with non-fiction to create a hybrid mix.

On the fictional level, it is the setting – the living room, the kitchen and the studio that
has been built over the back garden of No. 42 – that provides the liminal space where cross-
cultural interaction takes place. The moment the celebrity guest enters the Kumar household,
mostly a white Briton representing the cultural elite of the nation, he/she becomes a
representative of the majority culture, pitted against the fictional Kumar family, representatives
of the minority ethnic culture (Dannenberg, 2011: 87). The fact that interviewees carry along
with them their real world persona, in contrast to the fictional nature of the interviewers, makes
the ensuing dialogue more complex. It is not just an interaction between two cultures but also an
interaction between fiction and non-fiction that is ‘performed’. The interviewees are unprimed, unaware of the situation they are entering and therefore left to the mercy of the members of the Kumar family, who, though they have a scripted dialogue, often improvise as the situation demands it. Thus the interaction in the form of the interview is itself not based entirely on a preconceived script, and mimics through its improvised nature a probable real life interaction. The fictional Kumar family could be considered an example of an average British Indian family, for whom social advancement seems to be very significant (Dannenberg, 2011: 87; 2006: 192). Thus the parents have financed their son, Sanjeev’s aspirations to become a talk show host by building a studio in their own back garden, and paying celebrity guests with chutney instead of money, to be interviewees. This fictional framework, firmly places the members of the Kumar family as run of the mill, with no celebrity status to boast about, in stark contrast to the guests. This is confirmed in the very first episode of the series, where Sanjeev opens the door to the first celebrity guest Richard E. Grant and introduces himself as “Sanjeev Nothing Kumar” (K42, Episode 1) – the ‘nothing’ referring to his relatively insignificant status. However the tables are turned soon, when Sanjeev does not seem to remember any of Richard E. Grant’s films except the much talked about Withnail and I. The fact that he is lost for words, and cannot remember is not because he is awestruck, but rather it seems to be the general complacency of his character not to research his guests’ accomplishments well enough in advance, a point made repeatedly throughout the series. His complacency about Richard E. Grant’s celebrity status, when viewed against his former introduction, where he assumes an inferior position, destabilises the conventional ‘established’ hierarchical relationship, where Richard. E. Grant in his real life role has the upper hand, not only because of his celebrity status but also with regard to a traditional racial hierarchy. This fleeting interaction between two people, a fictional character and a non-fictional real life person, therefore comes to signify the subversive potential of the liminal space that Grant enters, namely No. 42. This is further intensified when on the talk show Sanjeev announces that Grant is the most famous actor from Swaziland and first asks him to explain the difference between Swaziland and Switzerland, as some viewers might not know the difference between the two, parodying ignorance of many viewers from the ‘first world’ as to their knowledge of ‘third world’ geography. He then asks the celebrity who is a descendant of the colonial elite whether he went to a school consisting of huts in Swaziland, again satirising
popular images of the ‘third world’ in the media. It is Sanjeev’s fictionality that allows him firstly the complacent and secondly the naive attitude, with which he can poke jibes at the real life guests, and the various positions of superiority they may represent. It is at this point where Sanjeev’s grandmother interjects, calling Sanjeev a “bewakoof” (K42, Episode 1), a Hindustani insult, which in Sushila’s own words mean “mentally defective idiot” (K42, Episode 1). This insult is then repeated by Grant. The use of this Hindustani insult by Richard E. Grant, while addressing Sanjeev, is pregnant with meaning. It could be seen as an appropriation of a foreign language in the process of empowerment, a postcolonial phenomenon exploited for instance by many authors and intellectuals from the subcontinent to the end of subverting traditional hierarchies. However, here it is the white male who appropriates the language of the traditionally ‘inferior’, pointing towards a shift in power, power that in the context of the show is held by the Kumar family, as the interrogators, “outnumber[ing]” the celebrity guests (Dannenberg, 2006: 192; 2011:87). The irony of the verbal exchange, and the subtext that it carries, again creates a moment of subversion. This is then compounded with Sanjeev asserting his own Britishness, when questioned about his own single A level, in comparison to Grant’s four, in an effort to cover up by saying: “African exams are different” (K42, Episode 1). He places Grant firmly in the ‘foreigner’ box. A further member of the Kumar family, who also questions Grant’s real life persona, is Ashwin Kumar. Ashwin, who is fond of narrating his own stories on the show, thereby making the chat show not just about the guest but equally about the Kumar family and breaking the conventions of the chat show genre (Dannenberg, 2006: 194), realises that Richard E. Grant and he share the experience of immigration to the motherland from the colony. The following dialogue ensues.

**Ashwin Kumar:** Mr. Grant, You know what I have just realised. You were an immigrant into this country.

**Richard E. Grant:** Yes

**Ashwin Kumar:** I was an immigrant into this country. (Grant gets up from his chair, goes and shakes Ashwin’s hand; applause from the audience)

**Richard E. Grant:** What passport have you got?

**Ashwin Kumar:** And this [pause] just hold on [pause] and this is the thing I have just realised, we are both successful.

**Sushila Kumar:** Was that a question?

**Sanjeev Kumar:** Suprisingly that was an interesting line of questioning from Dad. Do you ever still feel like an outsider.

**Ashwin Kumar:** I am glad you asked me that question.
Sanjeev Kumar: Dad. Dad (points to Richard E. Grant). I am talking to Richard.
Richard E. Grant: Quite a lot. What about you? (to Ashwin)
Ashwin Kumar: I feel, you know, we immigrants have worked hard and put a lot of money into the coffers of this country. (sigh of approval from Sushila)
Richard E. Grant: Definitely.
Ashwin Kumar: Both of us.
Richard E. Grant: Yes.
Ashwin Kumar: But to the ordinary idiot in the pub, we are just a couple of free loading black people.
Richard E. Grant: Exactly (Audience laughs and applauds) (K42, Episode 1).

Hilary P. Dannenberg explains the subversive potential of this scene:

The dialogue makes its point by playfully ignoring Grant’s whiteness and his superior social/celebrity status within British society. Mr Kumar constructs an obviously utopian ‘third place’ – an egalitarian zone in which he and the film star Grant are both simply upwardly mobile ‘black’ immigrants. This works to subversively underline the fact that in real world society, some immigrants are far more equal than others (2006: 194). The exaggeration of Ashwin’s last sentence and Grant’s unquestioning nod of agreement, in her opinion, underlines the fact that the egalitarian multiracial society is but a dream (2006: 194). In other words, Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence in the relationship between the Coloniser and Colonised that allows for subversion is taken a step further in this scene. According to Bhabha, it is the play between similarities and differences that create moments of slippage which are potentially subversive in nature exposing the ambivalence in the relationship between Coloniser and Colonised (MM, 1994: 122-123). Ashwin draws, step by step, similarities between himself and Grant, from being immigrants to working successfully and earning for Britain. He, however, does not play the obvious difference, that of race, including Grant in his own ‘racial category’, which Grant goes along with. However the laughter, which is generated, is from the oblivious attitude of both towards ‘racial difference’, a difference that stares everybody in their faces and therefore does not need articulation, but creates a slippage that through irony creates a moment of subversion. It is this oblivious indifference of the striking difference that makes it even more profound. Additionally it blurs boundaries between the real and the fictional, traditionally separate entities.

The other celebrity guest in the first episode is the famous chat show host Michael Parkinson, and as soon this is revealed to Sushila, she shows her high regard for him. She bursts into song, a popular Hindu religious song, replacing the god’s name with “Parki” (K42, Episode
a popular ‘term of endearment’ for the celebrity with an iconic status. She is devoted to him. According to Dannenberg, Sushila’s reaction to Parkinson, “comically foregrounds Parkinson’s superior celebrity/white male status, but also hyperbolically enacts the ‘colonial’ respect for the British establishment felt by the older generation of British Indians” (2006: 195).49 The exaggerated inversion of this respect becomes clear when one looks closely at the term she uses to address him, Parki, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the racist term ‘Paki’, used by white Britons to refer to people from the South Asian subcontinent. The ambiguity in meaning created by the similarity between the terms which are nonetheless different because of a single letter, results in ambivalence that allows for subversion. Even if we understand the term “Parki” as only a term of endearment not associated in the least with the insult ‘Paki’, using it to address a celebrity of Parkinson’s stature shows Sushila’s adoration is of an intimate nature which allows such a diminution. This becomes much clearer, as mentioned earlier, in the chat show section, where Sushila’s interaction with Michael Parkinson has a marked sexual undertone.

Sanjeev, on the other hand, is nervous about meeting Mr. Parkinson, aware of his iconic status as a chat show host, a career this fictional character aspires to. His interaction with his family before Michael Parkinson arrives, which involves repeated rehearsals of his questioning tactics for this particular guest, shows his nervousness, in spite of the facade he tries to put up. However, when the chat show begins, he introduces Parkinson saying: “My next guest is more than an inspiration, he’s an equal” (K42, Episode 1). His first question to Parkinson is about the celebrity’s potential retirement, a friendly way of indicating the hegemonic status this particular celebrity has attained in British media landscape and not just the genre of chat show. Sanjeev, in Dannenberg’s words, shows “a healthy lack of respect for white media hegemony” (2006: 195). The blurring of boundaries between fiction and non-fiction in the particular segment, with the fictional chat show host interviewing a real life chat show host, makes it immensely self reflexive.50 Sanjeev’s comments therefore hint at not just his aspirations as a fictional character, but also the extradiegetic realm of British media practitioners of South Asian origin having to still struggle for representation (Dannenberg, 2006: 195). It is in this realm as well that the series works as a liminal space. In a discourse dominated by white media practitioners, where British

49 This point is emphasized by Hilary P. Dannenberg in her 2011 analysis of the text (88).
50 Self-reflexivity is a feature that constantly occurs in the show. References to cameras present are made, which break the fourth wall successfully, making viewers aware of the constructed nature of this blend between fiction and non-fiction by referring to the extradiegetic realm of production.
South Asians have been marginalised, the series *The Kumars At No. 42* could be viewed as a temporal hybrid space, which does not just engage with cross-cultural debates on the diegetic level, but just by virtue of existing, it engages on the extradiegetic level with the hegemony of white Britons in media it is surrounded by.

### 3.1.1.2. Cross-Cultural Dialogues in a Call Centre: *Mumbai Calling* (ITV, 2009)  

One of the latest British South Asian sitcom starring Sanjeev Bhaskar, of *Kumars At No. 42* and *Goodness Gracious Me* fame, is *Mumbai Calling*. Set in Mumbai, India, as the name suggests, the sitcom shows the daily goings-on in a fictional call centre called ‘Teknobable’. Sanjeev Bhaskar plays Kenny Gupta, a British Indian from Wembley whose firm has sent him to head the call centre in India. The local manager, Dev Raja (Nitin Ganatra) is an Indian, for whom the concerns of work at the call centre seem to be of least importance, other aspects of his life taking priority. In addition, a white British woman, Terri Johnson (Daisy Beaumont), is sent in from the head office in Britain to assess the working of this call centre. The character constellation with the white Briton at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the British Indian, then the Indian manager and finally the rest of the staff, seems to mirror the power relations of the colonial era. Similarly, the concept of the call centre, outsourcing of work, with the controlling power of the head office being in the former colonial centre London, bears a striking similarity to the administrative structure of the Empire.

However, the space of the call centre, the actual space where cross-cultural interaction, i.e. between the Indian service providers and the British customers, occurs, could also be considered the liminal space, in the same way as the Kumars’ home in *The Kumars At No. 42* does. It is through the humour produced through these interactions that the formal structure of this call centre and its striking similarity to strict hierarchies of the colonial era are deconstructed and subverted.

Therefore the name of the call centre “Teknobable” seems apt for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it could be understood as a comic pun which signifies the fact that to laymen the talk of

51 All quotes from *Mumbai Calling (MC)* are self-transcribed.
52 The latest British South Asian sitcom on British Television is *Citizen Khan*, written by Anil Gupta, which started broadcast in Aug 2012 on BBC.
53 An American sitcom, *Outsourced* (NBC, 2010-2011) shares a similar setting and plot i.e. call centre in India, with American managers and Indian employees with *Mumbai Calling*. It is a spin off on the romantic comedy film of the same name (John Jeffcoat, 2006).
technology might be as incomprehensible as babble. In this sense, it questions former hierarchies by placing intellectual power in the hands of the service providers, i.e., the experts in this Indian call centre. The opening scene of the first episode illustrates this with an Indian call centre employee trying to explain to a British woman at the other end of the telephone line that the calorie content of a bar of chocolate remains the same no matter how one eats it.

Sarika (Call centre employee): Product Information Line.
Caller: Hello, I wanted to check how many calories there are in one of your velvet truffle chocolate bars.
Sarika: I’ll just check for you madam. 400.
Caller: Oh. Oh. What about half a bar?
Sarika: That would be 200.
Caller: What about if I have it with a glass of water?
Sarika: 200
Caller: If I ate it lying down?
Sarika: 200
Caller: What about if I eat really really really really quickly?
Sarika (irritated): Well in that case madam its calorie free. You can even have two.
Caller: Oh brilliant!
Sarika ends the call (MC, Episode 1).

Secondly, the name of the call centre could be interpreted in the context of emerging stereotypes associated with India as a rapidly developing country. As technological advancement seems to be one of these, the ‘tekno’, and its juxtaposition with the word babble works towards a comic destabilisation of this stereotype. The misspelling also hints at an appropriation of the English language, where the prefix and suffix spelt differently – techno and babble – signalling a playful familiarity with the language of the former coloniser.

Thirdly, in the context of call centres as a manifestation of cross-cultural dialogue, the word ‘babble’ is of particular significance. Cross-cultural dialogues, when constrained within the rigid parameters of hierarchical power relationships (the formal structure of a call centre is supposed to represent) are meaningless, like babble. In the sitcom, however, the entire staff of ‘Teknobable’ plays with notions of traditional hierarchies between homogeneous and essentialised identities making the name rather ironic. For instance, in the first episode, the head office in London has been unsuccessfully trying to contact Kenny Gupta. The receptionist, who answers calls from the head office, unable to locate him, just puts the head office on hold. She mimics the voice of an automatised telephone operator and says: “You are in a queue now.
Please hold the line” (*MC*, Episode 1, Subtitles) in Hindi, most probably incomprehensible to the person at the other end. The humour of the sequence is derived from the intuitiveness of her way of dealing with the constant calls from the head office. It shows a hint of insubordination, which in the context of the hierarchies in the call centre and the extrapolated cultural and racial hierarchies could be interpreted as an act of subversion.

Additionally, many instances throughout the sitcom work towards the subversion of traditional hierarchies by comically questioning the idea of pure, homogeneous and essentialised cultures as being separate, mutually exclusive monads. Acknowledging that cultures and individuals are heterogeneous, having a variety of often contradictory attributes debunks their traditional simplistic classification in a hierarchical system. Kenny Gupta provides the perfect example here as the British Indian, meant to liaise between the head office in Britain and the outsourced call centre in India. His function, at the first glance, seems to be similar to that of Macaulay’s educated Indian (2003), an intermediate between the rulers and the ruled. In the first episode, a conversation between Kenny and his boss in Britain is shown as a flash-back sequence explaining how Kenny Gupta arrived in India.

**Boss**: Ah Gupta. It has come to my attention that you are an Indian.

**Gupta**: Actually I am not, sir er.

**Boss**: A promotion has come up for an Indian.

**Gupta**: Wonderful (in a stereotypically Indian accent).

**Boss**: Head of operations for a new facility I’ve acquired.

**Gupta**: Wow.

**Boss**: You are going home, son.

**Gupta**: Wembley?

**Boss**: No. India.

**Gupta**: India? No, sir, I can’t. Sorry. It’s out of question (*MC*, Episode 1).

The dialogue above illustrates that for Kenny’s boss, Kenny is an Indian in spite of the fact that Kenny hardly identifies himself as Indian, his home being Wembley rather than India. However, Kenny’s initial response when he hears of the promotion is that he mimics/appropriates a stereotypical Indian accent to fit his boss’s expectations. He tries to use the situation to his advantage, by exaggerating his ‘Indianness’, a comic situation in the sequence that only serves to underline the meaninglessness of his boss’s expectations. The stereotypical view of India and ‘Indianness’ (represented here through the accent), generated by essentialised notions of cultural identities is being ridiculed here.
The very next sequence does the same for British cultures. It is a dialogue between Dev and one of the employees of the call centre. Dev, trying to explain Kenny’s absence, says:

Dev: Also, don’t forget Mr. Kenny is British. They invented hard work, dedication and punctuality.
Employee: They also invented the three day week, the sickie and the snooze button (MC, Episode 1).

In contrast to the former dialogue, Kenny here is fixed by an Indian, Dev, as clearly British, and therefore characterised by virtuous traits, like hard work, punctuality and dedication. Defining Britishness singularly through these traits, it is Dev this time who is representing an essentialised, stereotypical (even if it is positive) notion of culture. He is, however, soon countered by his employee who lists examples of inventions of the British that contradict these traits. Here, again the joke is on an essentialised notion of a culture.

Essentialised conceptions of both cultures, British and Indian, and colonial hierarchies associated with them are ridiculed in an effort to enforce the heterogeneous nature of cultures and the identities of individuals belonging to them in these examples.

Another strategy used by the text to deconstruct colonial or similar hierarchical structures of power is the total reversal of stereotypes to produce a comic effect. Here attributes associated with one culture, often used to establish and manifest a position in a hierarchy, are unexpectedly applied to the other creating a humorous situation, but in the process exposing the nature of the stereotypes. For instance, in the first episode again, one of the problems the employees are dealing with is the flood situation in Manchester. Sarika first approaches Dev with the problem that there are “continuous calls from Manchester ... about people’s houses being flooded ... water ... coming out of dish washers, washing machines and toilets ... overflowing raw sewage” (MC, Episode 1). Dev, who is trying to find Kenny, is not concerned about the flooding problem. He seems oblivious about the fact that the call centre employees are supposed to help the callers from Manchester, and, on hearing Sarika’s description of the seriousness of the situation, reacts with disgust. He says:

Totally gross, man! Floating crap like surface submarines. Can you imagine it, Sarika? U-boats from the U-bend. Tor-poo-does! Is that the remote control? No, its poo! Are those my slippers? No, they are poos! Do you fancy a cereal bar? Don’t touch that. It’s poo! It’s disgusting! Ergh! (MC, Episode 1).
In spite of the fact that it is his job to deal with the situation and provide support, he does not just brush the matter aside as is typical of his character. Instead he reacts by expressing utter disgust. At first Dev’s extreme reaction appears to be for the sole purpose of producing comedy through exaggeration. However, later in the episode he again comments on the situation in Manchester saying: “Oh! Third World Britain, blighted with natural disasters” (MC, Episode 1). It is through this comment that the reversal of stereotypes takes place. Britain as a ‘First World’ nation is not supposed to have natural disasters, and India on the other hand as a ‘Third World’ nation often does. The association of natural disasters and their repercussions (conditions involving chaos, lack of hygiene) with ‘Third World’ countries has come to be a stereotype in the ‘Third World discourse’ as described by Arturo Escobar in his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995). This discourse, according to Escobar, revolves around stereotypes created through representations of developing countries in pure economic terms and shows patterns similar to the oriental and colonial discourses, as it propagates an Othering on the basis of financial power. Furthermore, the nations that comprise the ‘Third World’ today were more often than not, former colonies of the so called ‘First World’ nations. Both of Dev’s comments with regard to the flood situation in Manchester can therefore be seen as statements or reactions that would be common in the Third World discourse. The unexpected association with Britain which produces the laughs, however, works subtly to undermine these discourses by exposing the true nature of such stereotypes.

Another such reversal occurs in episode 3 where, Terri decides to hire a British actor to teach the Indian employees British regional accents. Benedict Harlow, played by Richard E. Grant, a huge fan of Shakespeare, is on his way to Teknobable call centre, after his play, “Much Ado about the Taming of a Tempest on a Midsummer’s Night’s Shrew” (MC, Episode 3), has been cancelled at the Mooli Theatre in Mumbai. He hails a cab and starts asking the cab driver to take him to the office in broken Hindi mixed with English, other random words that belong to neither and some words that appear to be completely out of context.

**Benedict:** Salem Salem. Hamay baldo jaldi for Teknobable offices tutti frutti.
**Cab Driver:** Where do you want to go, sir?
**Benedict:** Ah. Pidgin English. Er.. I want to go here. (shows the driver a piece of paper) You read?
**Cab Driver:** Yes (MC, Episode 3).
Harlow’s almost incomprehensible sentence in the beginning of this sequence is without doubt closer to pidgin English (or pidgin Hindi for that matter), than the cab driver’s standard use of the English language. According to most expectations, Harlow, as the Briton, should use the standard variety and, if anyone, it should be the cab driver who should use broken or Pidgin English. Yet, Harlow characterises the driver’s English as pidgin. The reversal does not just produce laughs but undermines such ‘logical’ assumptions based on stereotypes.

Further in the episode it is made clear that Harlow’s English is dated and not contemporary, and the training he gives the call centre employees is utterly useless. He asks for instance to greet the customers at the other end of the line with “Good Morrow, is Thou having a good day?” Instead of teaching the Indian employees British regional accents, he teaches them his prejudices against the Scots, Geordies, Brummies and the Welsh, leading Terri to fire him eventually. Through the characterisation of Harlow this episode critiques the hegemony of a certain variety of English that originated in the South of England over not just the former colonies, but also over other varieties spoken in Britain itself. The role of language in domination of cultures and nations is exposed and critiqued.

The last episode of the series, episode 7 “All That Glitters is not Glass”, blatantly manifests the idea of subversion of hierarchical power relations possible in the liminal space between cultures by building the theme into its plot. The strict formal structure of the call centre and its internal hierarchies appear to be reinforced in the beginning of this episode by the introduction of the character of Phillip Glass, the owner of P. Glass Holdings, of which Teknobable is a part. The meeting held to brief the employees on Glass’s stature brings up the question of who is the boss.

Kenny: Phillip Glass is on his way. Now, I know you’re used to seeing me as the big boss. But when he arrives (Dev interrupts) What?
Dev: Actually, we see Miss Terri as the big boss and you as the next not-so-big boss.
Kenny: Well Dev, I don’t think you speak for everyone.
Other employees agree with Dev.
Kenny: Look, take it from me. Phillip Glass is the biggest boss you will ever meet. And if he doesn’t like what he sees, we’ll be out on our arses (MC, Episode 7).

54 Though the character of Phillip Glass is mentioned in previous episodes, he has never appeared on screen. His relationship with Terri Johnson has also been hinted at earlier on in the series.
Not just as the ‘biggest boss’ in Kenny’s own words but also as the white male Glass is at the top of the traditional hierarchy. Two discourses are revealed here, one of gender and the other of race which are explored and deconstructed in conjunction with the financial power Glass possesses. Glass is characterised negatively with respect to both these discourses. The first sequence, actually including him, shows him fixing a date with an airhostess, soon after which, he is talking on the phone with his wife, and it is not much later that it is discovered that he has been having an affair with Terri as well. His attitude towards women, considering them subordinate objects males are supposed to derive pleasure from, and clear in the way he compares them to cars, is epitomised in the sentence where he tells Kenny how his wife “Estelle is the real deal, once [she has] had her breasts, lips and buttocks done” (MC, Episode 3).

When it comes to the question of race and cultures, his discriminatory attitude is clear in the way he anglicises Indian names, without even making the slightest effort to pronounce them correctly, calling Amit – Albert, Dev Raja – David Rogers and Sarika – Sharon.

The plot of this episode revolves around how Terri and Dev turn the tables on Phillip Glass. Once Glass discovers Kenny’s mobile and boxers in Terri’s bed, he fires Kenny. Dev, who does not want Kenny fired, reveals to Terri, who believes Glass is in the process of divorcing his wife, that this is not true. Terri, on realising that Glass has no plans of leaving his wife for her, blackmails him into allowing Kenny to stay. Terri and Dev together are successful in saving Kenny from losing his job and undermine Glass’s position as the boss.

When looked at closely, both Terri as the woman (female Other) and Dev as the Indian (former colonised Other) represent the victims of Glass’s patriarchal racist attitude. It is through their combined effort that the set hierarchy is undermined. They have not always seen eye to eye as plots of previous episodes reveal, needing Kenny often to liaise between them. In an extrapolated sense Terri and Dev themselves come from different cultures, British and Indian respectively, Kenny being the in-between as the British Indian. However, it is through their team effort, a productive cross-cultural dialogue that they manage to subvert the traditional hierarchies that Glass represents and save Kenny who represents the in-between, the liminal.

*Mumbai Calling* celebrates the possibilities of subversion of traditional hierarchies that the liminal space provides. On the extradiegetic level of the discourse of British South Asian representations in audio-visual media, the series *Mumbai Calling* like *The Kumars’s At No. 42*,
as a British South Asian production, could also be considered as a subversion of the hegemony of the almost exclusively white genre of sitcoms.

### 3.1.2. Diasporic Journeys of Becoming

The word ‘journey’ in the case of a diaspora connotes, on the one hand, quite literally a geographical journey, of leaving the country of origin and settling in a new country. On the other hand, it also refers to a temporal journey between a historical home and the new home. Though appearing to be essentialised binaries, the old opposed to the new, it is the journey between them that is of significance to diasporic identity. It is this aspect of journey that Stuart Hall emphasizes in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, when by historicising the concept of diasporic identities he says that they “undergo constant transformation” (2003: 112). The following section analyses this journey between the old and the new in the geographical and the temporal sense of the word, in the television texts *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* and *A Sikh’s Journey Home*. The aspect of time, its significance in the changing nature of identity - individual, familial and finally cultural - is the focus of the analysis of *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. The analysis of *A Sikh’s Journey Home* concentrates on the geographical aspect, located precisely through the use of the word ‘home’ and how this undergoes transformation and its relation to diasporic identity.

#### 3.1.2.1. The Synthesis of the Past and the Present: *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (BBC, 2005)

Adapted from Meera Syal’s novel (1999), the television miniseries of the same name, broadcast on BBC in 2005, narrates the stories of three women of Indian origin, in their mid thirties, living in Leighton. The three parts of the series with three female protagonists, Tania (Laila Rouass), Sunita (Meera Syal) and Chila (Ayesha Dharker), span approximately a year of their lives staying close to narrative of the book. The first part begins with Chila’s marriage to Deepak (Ace Bhatti), a much sought after, spoilt rich boy in Chigwell’s Indian community, Tania’s struggle to establish herself in the media world where she, as a director, is expected to make documentaries about the British South Asian community, and Sunita’s troubled marriage to psychotherapist

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55 All quotes from *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (LIAHH) are self-transcribed.

56 Tania is expected to make documentaries about people of South Asian origin, because of her own ethnicity. This aspect of the narrative reflects on Gurinder Chadha’s experience cited in 2.3.11. of this study.
Akaash (Sanjeev Bhaskar). Tania decides to document the ‘truth’ about her friends’ marriages for her film, and after the premiere of her film, the friendship between her and the others is on the rocks. The second part of the dramatisation, narrated by Sunita, focuses on her relationship with her husband, which has deteriorated over the years, and her attempts to assert her own identity. It also includes Tania’s affair with her ex-lover, now Chila’s husband, Deepak, and Chila’s pregnancy. The third and final part, which is narrated by Chila, forms the climax, with Chila splitting up with her husband after she realises that her husband has been having an affair with Tania and after her baby is born. Sunita reconciles with her husband, and Tania ends her affair with Deepak. Finally, the three friends come together; however, this does not imply a complete restoration of their 30 year old friendship.

In the depiction of the three different female protagonists, who all play the role of narrator for a part of the text, the dramatisation successfully addresses the idea of the non-essentialised identity. Tania, Chila and Sunita – all three British South Asian women in their mid-thirties, have been friends for a long time and share some experiences, and beliefs. At the same time, they are radically different from each other and constantly question stereotypes associated with British Indian women. The aspect of female identities has been the focus of many articles and papers analysing the novel from which the drama has been adapted. The focus of the following analysis is different, as it takes into account another factor that is of much significance to diasporic identities. It looks for the representation of the temporal journeys in the form of a dialectics of the past and present that form an important part of diasporic identities.

The opening titles of the film text is accompanied with the sequence of shared memories – video recordings of the three women as children dancing and playing together and Tania’s voice over, narrating the origins of their friendship. It begins: “Once upon a time there were three girls – Sunita, Chila and Tania” (LIAHH, Part 1) a distant, detached, perspective towards the past, which is fairy-tale like and almost unreal, considering that the narrator is one of the three girls. The sequence now turns to three older women dancing and the choice of pronoun “we” by the narrator in the next sentence, as she starts talks of the present. The jump from the third person to a more inclusive first person highlights the discontinuities, the process of change, the evolution, while at the same time also emphasising the continuities. From a simple fairy-tale like existence when the protagonists were children, where “loving each other was as simple as
dancing” (*LIAHH*, Part 1) the present situation has developed into a complex one where they “still love each other” and “still love dancing”. The continuities and the discontinuities that result from the dialectic dynamic interaction of the past with the present represented in this opening sequence of the film seems to be one of the central aspects of the drama. In the very next sentence, where the narrator compares Indian women’s life to dog’s years, time is brought into focus again, though in a very specific cultural context.

So when Tania starts introducing her friends, she starts with the past, and continues to the present, unexpected change being the consistent aspect in all their lives. Contrary to everybody’s expectations, Chila, not the brightest one, is getting married to the catch of the community, Deepak. Sunita, who was supposed to be “a brilliant lawyer”, has become “a brilliant mum”. And Tania, herself, is the “bad girl made good” (*LIAHH*, Part 1; my emphasis). Individual characters’ development, with emphasis on the non-static nature of identities located somewhere between the past and the present, is an aspect common to realist narratives, and *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* follows this rule; it does so by in a different context, that of the diaspora, where the aspect of time and the resulting development of identities form additional facets of cultural in-betweeness.

As Stuart Hall asserts, diasporic identity is not just “being” but “becoming” (Hall, 2003: 112). The journey from one culture to another has a strong temporal dimension to it. It represents not just a spatial ‘in-betweeness’ of two cultures but a temporal one too – the temporal journey from the past to present time taking the form of cultural and individual memory and contributing greatly to diasporic identity. The women protagonists in *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* are all dealing with their individual histories (the past) that affects their present, a dialectic synthesis of the past and the present being represented with each recounting of a tale of their youth in their present. At Chila’s wedding, the setting in which the film begins, anecdotes about their shared youth form an important part of the conversation. When Tania comes into the bathroom holding a camera, the present situation is immediately connected to an incident in the past, and an anecdote about the 16th birthday of a common friend, Manju. The act of capturing the present with the camera (as recording the present for the future) is given additional meaning by the anecdote about the past. Similarly, when Tania talks of “the blokes who turned her down” among the wedding party, she points the camera at them, capturing their present, however, narrating the
past. Sunita and Chila also indulge in such moments, where their individual journeys from the past to the present are thematised. In the second part of the drama, Sunita and Chila are at the hospital where, Sunita, being suspicious of the doctors’ refusal to tell Chila the sex of the unborn child, connects this to discrimination against South Asians. Chila in turn connects Sunita’s outburst to her past. Sunita has been an activist for various causes, among them equality for different ethnicities. These anecdotes that reveal facets of identities are more often than not rooted deeply in the specific cultural context of the Indian diaspora in Britain, and not only individual memory. Tania’s being rejected by men from the British Indian community because she is too ‘modern’ or Sunita’s past activism against racism are not necessarily arbitrary individual experiences, but hint strongly at a specific context.

However, on the individual level, the past seems equally important bearing its mark on the present. Sunita’s relationship with Akaash, for instance, has been deteriorating ever since their son was born, a fact that both mention more than once. Her present state of severe depression culminating in self-mutilation is a result of a series of events in the past, including an abortion she has kept secret from her husband. Each scar on her arm is a physical manifestation of the moments of utter sadness, causes of which lie not just in her present unhappy situation with her husband but also her past. Her arm is almost a map of the trauma her individual identity has been through over the years, negotiating various subject positions – an activist, a working woman, a wife, a mother and a friend. Even when she meets the young doctor and finds new purpose to her life and stops cutting herself, the scars remain.

Chila’s ‘naive’ world view also changes through the course of the narrative. From the girl whose only goal is to please her husband she becomes one who determines the kind of life she wants to live independently at the end of the film. Contrary to expectations, she does not simply go back to Deepak or break all contact with him once she discovers that he has been having an affair with Tania. She chooses a ‘middle’ path, allows him to maintain contact, to have a part in their son’s life. Her choice reflects the synthesis of the person she used to be, and person she is becoming. Not allowing Deepak back completely into her life reflects the change from the past, where all her actions were directed towards pleasing him. On the other hand, by not breaking complete contact with him, as her mother advises her to do by filing for divorce, she still lets her affection for him from the past linger. She, in fact, goes out on a date with him but firmly holds
her own ground, when she dislikes the advances he makes. Her story, like Sunita’s, reflects her individual history, her identity in the process of becoming, situated somewhere between the past and the present.

Apart from the individual female protagonists’ characters, instances in the setting of the narrative are also symbolic of this synthesis of the past and the present. The priest, for instance, at Chila’s wedding, quite contrary to expectations, cites Elvis Presley when talking to other guests who are discussing this highly unexpected match. “I say to you, ladies. No use having suspicious minds. He loves her tender; and no doubt she is his teddy bear” (LIAHH, Part 1). The music playing in the background, is also a Presley hit – *It’s now or never*, reminiscent of a bygone era, but in its lyrics talking of the present moment, i.e. the now. The song is not just an unusual choice for an Indian wedding, it adds to layers of meaning to this hybrid cultural event which, with the guests and their conversation, is in itself a representation of many eras of time coming together. The temporal aspect of diasporic identity, its journey from the past to the present, the experiences in Britain of the community as a whole, the struggle against racism and cultural alienation are also represented in the narrative. Tania talks of political solidarity of coloured Britons, and the way she used to call herself ‘Black’. Sunita and she together reflect on the shared history of their generation of British South Asians, a factor that has determined both their identities. In the car with Tania on the way to meet Chila, Sunita spots some young women of South Asian origin on the streets in front of a shop that sells South Asian clothes.

*Sunita*: Look at them. We used to get spat on the street for wearing bindis. Why wasn’t it cool to be Asian when we were that age?

*Tania*: Speak for yourself, girlfriend, because I’ve always been cool.

*Sunita*: You know if it wasn’t for us lot fighting the fight that lot would be sitting at home making chappatis (LIAHH, Part 1; my emphasis).

From the very beginning, she distinguishes immediately between two generations of British South Asians with the use of the pronouns ‘them’ in opposition to the ‘we’. She reflects on the racist abuse that was directed against her generation and then goes on to talk of the struggle that one generation went through to make the future more pleasant for the others to follow. The experience is not just ingrained in her individual identity, or the identity of her generation, but indirectly in the identity of the next as well, for whom life has become relatively easy, because of the struggles fought in the past. These lines highlight this journey over time, the transcendence of
experience over generations that manifests itself in identities, whether individual, communal or cultural.

This passing down of personality traits, knowledge and experience from one generation to another, which as mentioned above, is a vital aspect of diasporic experience and therefore identity is also thematised in the narrative on the level of the individual. The role of familial history in the individual’s identity could be extrapolated to the level of diasporic cultures, where diasporic experience gathered over time becomes, sometimes involuntarily, an integral discursive reference point for future generations of diasporic identities.

Akaash, for instance, as a marriage counsellor, recognises the traits his British South Asian patients have inherited from their parents that are affecting their marriage. He says: “Now we all have old habits to break. For you Seema, it’s your mother’s passivity, and for you Raj, it’s your father’s temper. Now let’s break them now. Forget about your parents or society sitting on your shoulders” (*LIAHH*, Part 1). His suggestion of letting go of the inherited influences, however, does not function, and his demand for honesty from his patients, leads only to a rather ironic re-manifestation of these inherited traits. Seema, in her ‘typically’ detached way, tells her husband that she does not love him anymore and has met someone else, takes off her wedding ring indicating an end to their marriage, at which Raj’s violent outburst cannot be contained.

Other instances in the narrative thematise the passing on of information, wisdom and knowledge too. Chila’s mother tells her on the day of her wedding “Today will be perfect, but marriage isn’t. Remember baby, life isn’t all ha ha hee hee. You will suffer some of the worst days of your life, probably. But then every good day will come as a surprise” (*LIAHH*, Part 1), she talks with wisdom of a collective feminine experience, rather than an individual one. This bleak experience seems to be the fate of many women, and she passes on what some might consider some cynical advice to her daughter, who has been characterised as naive. And at the end of the narrative Chila repeats this to her husband, confirming her own coming of age, her own ways of dealing her own experience of marriage and life, which hasn’t been all “ha ha hee hee” (*LIAHH*).

Similarly, Sunita’s daughter hints at this phenomenon when she finds her mother in tears sitting among shards of glass. “Don’t be sad, mum. Because, you will pass it on to me” (*LIAHH*, Part 2). What seems like a selfish statement carries a deeper meaning, the passing on of
experience from generation to generation, in the form of memory, is in this particular case, in the context of a family, but could equally be extrapolated to diasporic cultures.

The entire narrative embodies the impossibility in the separation of the past from the present. Tania’s relationship with Deepak is something that she herself describes as “ancient history” (*LIAHH*, Part 1). However, the turn of events that lead to the ultimate climax in the friendship of the three women, is his return as her lover. Deepak symbolises not just a time that is past for Tania, but, a past with cultural connotations that she is not willing to let go of. When she accepts Martin’s proposal she is aware that she is breaking ties with more than just a past lover. She says: “I will never hear Punjabi in my bed again” (*LIAHH*, Part 1). With mention of the language Punjabi, that ironically Tania herself does not speak or understand, she establishes a connection to culture. When she begins an affair with Deepak, she feels the need for him to speak in Punjabi to her again. The temporal dimension – the return of Deepak in a specific role as Tania’s lover – has cultural meaning. In its simplest of elements, events, the structure of the narrative once again thematises the dialectic synthesis of past and present that plays a role of utmost significance in diasporic cultural identities. In the course of the narrative this is articulated very emphatically when Tania says at one point: “Nothing changes” to which Sunita answers “Everything does” (*LIAHH*, Part 1). The juxtaposition of these too opposing statements leads to continual evolution of identities.

Apart from their individual relationships with their partners, the long and strong friendship between Sunita, Chila and Tania faces big hurdles during the course of the year. Finally after the resolution of the conflict, they have a sleepover after decades, however, under changed present circumstances. The sequence with the three lying in bed together is a powerful one, symbolising not just their past friendship, their present problems, but also the future – Chila’s son – the next generation. Tania’s second film depicts “the stories that shouldn’t be forgotten” (*LIAHH*, Part 3). The film within the film shows a compilation of the three as girls and the intensity of their past friendship. This connects to the present, the three of them getting together to watch a film, still laughing and joking, illustrating they still have remained friends in spite of the trials their friendship has had to face. The stories of their past friendship continue to be remembered in the present.
The past indeed interacts with the present leading to a dialectic evolution of identities. *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* illustrates this process on various levels. Not only each of the female protagonists reflects this in their identities – the carrying on of the past into the present affects them as a group. Their shared childhood and their common experiences growing up, play an important role in defining their common present and future. The fact that this past is a common, shared one is significant. Their situation could be extrapolated to represent a heterogeneous diasporic community, where a common shared past is similarly significant for present and future cultural identities. Even the last sentence in narrative in Chila’s voice is a rhetorical question which emphasises this process of evolution “Our endings are always the same. It’s how you get there that counts. Innit?” (*LIAHH*, Part 3).

### 3.1.2.2. Fluid Notions of ‘Home’: *A Sikh’s Journey Home* (BBC, 2008) 57

The journey of a diaspora, the movement, both in time and space, is the central theme of the non-fictional documentary *A Sikh’s Journey Home* that accompanies an individual member of the British South Asian diaspora and his family through a phase of their lives. Focusing on the journey of Dari Mankoo and his family over generations through several continents, the film brings out different implications of diasporic journeys and their relation to identity by exploring notions of ‘home’. This factor has been significant in organically driven processes of identity construction. The observational style of the documentary lets the subjects, Dari, his wife Tina, and their daughters Kiran and Prabhjot speak to the audience and interact with each other with hardly any interjection from the film makers as interviewers. However, the film often uses visual texts that introduce characters or link individual narratives and provide a thread of continuity to the documentary. The documentary begins with the images of a temple, bare feet of visitors, with religious music in the background, superimposed with such text. “This is a story of a Sikh family. Like so many other families, their quest is to find their place in the world” (*ASJH*). At this stage, the text does not mention the particular nature of this quest, rather generalising it comparing it to many other quests of many other families. For Dari Mankoo and his family, this quest has to do with their diasporic identities, identities that are associated with different geographical locations. The documentary then shows Dari Mankoo introducing himself with his

57 All quotes from *A Sikh’s Journey Home* (*ASJH*) are self-transcribed.
full name Deedar Singh Mankoo. He further mentions that he was born in Nairobi in Kenya, where his grandparents had migrated to from India around the 1890s. He came from Nairobi to the UK in 1972. As a diasporic subject, his identity is closely linked with these paths and journeys, he and his family have had to undertake over generations, and therefore they influence his introduction heavily. These physical journeys, his grandparents’ from India to Nairobi, or his from the Nairobi to the UK seem to be so significant to him and his self definition, that he relates them to the audience within the first few seconds of his introduction, just after he tells them his name. His description of himself is associated directly to geographical places.

Even visually, the aspect of journey is emphasized in the very first sequence showing Dari Mankoo, who happens to be a train driver for the London tube. In a series of shots of the London tube interspersed with close-ups of Dari driving a train; ‘movement’, ‘travel’ and ‘journeys’ stand out as motifs.

In contrast to the fictional narrative Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee, where the temporal aspect of diasporic journeys, dialectic synthesis of the past and the present and its relation to diasporic identities is explored, the documentary A Sikh’s Journey Home, concentrates more on the spatial aspects of this journey, the different geographical locations that the subjects of this documentary associate with, exploring the concept of ‘home’.

For Dari, the move to UK from Kenya, his own personal journey, is of extreme significance to his identity. He narrates the bearings this ‘new’ place of abode had on the expression of his identity. His desire to be ‘white’ which led him to cut his hair, wear a crucifix and go to church regularly, and in the process denying his own roots and living a facade, came with the move to the UK. The suppression of a significant part of his identity, his religion – Sikhism –, is linked undeniably to the new ‘home’ i.e. the UK, and his desire to fit in there by obliterating his ‘difference’, his Otherness. Resonating Frantz Fanon’s theory of the Black man

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58 According to Avtar Brah the journeys that a diaspora undertake are essentially different from other travels or journeys insofar as they occur as a result of specific socio-political, economic and cultural circumstances, and are not altogether voluntary movements of temporary nature (Brah, 1996: 181-182). Dari Mankoo’s and his family’s travel from India to Kenya in the late 19th century is very likely linked to the movement of indentured labourers from the South Asian to the African continent as a result of colonialism. And then his coming to the UK from Kenya in 1972 is also almost certainly linked to ethnic cleansing movements in East Africa in the late 60s and the 70s. Both journeys are therefore embedded in a specific historical and cultural context and are important part of cultural identities of diasporic subjects who share similar trajectories.
denying his ‘blackness’ from the book _Black Skin White Masks_ (2008), the change in Dari’s expression of his identity can be understood in psychological terms as a common phenomenon occurring among colonised subjects.

His first journey to India, (the land of his ancestors), in 1981 including his personal emotional experience in the Golden Temple causes a significant shift in his way of viewing himself. Here in this space (the Golden Temple, one of the most important places of worship for the Sikhs), Dari is forced to confront his religious roots, and decides to let go of the facade he has been living. On his return to the UK, he decides to wear his turban, a religious signifier for the Sikhs, and as he describes it: a Sikh man’s “identity” (ASJH). He sums up: “For me that was the crucial moment in my life where I was pushed over back to who I really am” (ASJH).

At this point, the title of the documentary _A Sikh’s Journey Home_ is revealed to the audience, prompting at a first glance the conclusion, that India is ‘home’ for this Sikh. A text insert soon follows stating the year 2005 and the following: “Dari’s desire is to make his family aware of his Sikh roots. They plan a life changing journey to India” (ASJH; my emphasis). Immediately after this, Dari’s family is introduced, his wife Itwender Kaur Mankoo (Tina) taking over the narration through voice over and introducing herself and their daughters. The sequence is shot at a bowling alley, where the family appear to be spending their free time together. Dari takes over again, explaining his reasons for planning this trip to India. “They live in a little cocoon, in the comfort of their own home, in the comfort of their parents” (ASJH; my emphasis). At this point the voice over is juxtaposed with a visual of the flag of England, hanging in the bowling alley, creating a new geographical association for the word home for Mankoo family. He continues: “So what they think is normal for them the other half of the world can only dream about. I want them to be thankful about how lucky they are. I want them to realise how lucky they are. It is just like going to India” (ASJH; my emphasis). India is othered by Dari himself, questioning the conclusion prompted by the title where India could be interpreted as home. For Dari the trip to India is a trip for his children to see “the other side that they have never seen. They don’t know what poverty is. So I want to take them to India definitely” (ASJH; my emphasis). His primary concern appears to be to educate his daughters about poverty and the value of money, rather than solely acquainting them with their ‘roots’. 
And the motivation for this lies in his familial experience. Dari mentions that his family was rich till his father lost all his money. Visuals of this memory are provided in the documentary through black and white pictures of Dari and his family when Dari was a child, pictures presumably from Kenya. Though reasons for the loss of the money are not specified, it can be assumed that the fate of this East African Asian family was similar to those of other East African Asian families who were forced to give up all their wealth and to flee the country in the face of ethnic cleansing movements in East Africa in the late 60s and early 70s. Nairobi, Kenya, a former ‘home’ is again evoked as a geographical location with memories so significant that they influence Dari’s decisions even today.

On the other hand it is Dari’s wife, Tina, who talks of the spiritual and religious connection to India. For her to go back to India, and specifically to Hemkund Sahib, another place of utmost religious significance for Sikhs, is about feeling a connection to her ‘roots’. She says: “India would be more like roots” (ASJH). Her Sikh lineage is important to her identity; however, she does not use the term ‘home’ to describe India.

It is Prabhjot, the elder Mankoo daughter, who ponders with the idea of India as home. She has never been to India, but hopes to “feel more connected to it than a tourist” and says, “spiritually, I would expect to have like maybe a little feeling here, maybe like I’ve come home” (ASJH; my emphasis).

Through the various voices and associations of the Mankoo family members the documentary invokes many different geographical locations as possible homes. A dynamic, shifting notion of home is represented rather than a permanently static space, carrying differing meanings for different individuals within a family at different points of time. In the course of the documentary, it is revealed that the trip to India has been postponed due to unforeseen difficult personal circumstances. Then in an interview a year later (2006) the documentary informs its audience that the family are moving to Brisbane, Australia, where Tina Mankoo has received a lucrative job offer. Dari Mankoo and his family are migrating again. And on his last day of work, in the train, Dari uses the word ‘home’ in yet another different context, this time referring presumably to the new destination Brisbane, Australia, a move he considers positive, in spite of the logistical problems it entails, as he considers it a better place for his children to grow up. For
Tina, who sees the migration as positive as well, Australia means a “fresh start” (ASJH), leaving behind a set of problems. When asked if she is going to miss her house, she replies,

No. At the end of the day it is just bricks and mortar. And when you die you leave it. And that is all it was, is to cover your head. So, all that I will leave behind here, I will get another bricks and mortar there as well. No attachment (ASJH).

This reply is in the form of a voice over accompanying a sequence of shots of London’s famous icons, the Thames, London Eye, St. Peter’s Church, the Gherkin and is the last interaction with the Mankoo family in the documentary. This sequence implies London is what the Mankoo family is leaving behind. They are not emotionally distraught about the departure, as Tina’s comment explains, because they are leaving just another place of abode, a geographical location, opting rather for a dynamic notion of ‘home’.

The culmination of this thought is put into words by Dari, when while painting the outside walls of his London house he says “The home is like a petrol station. You only come up here. You fill your tank up. And in the morning you go on your journey again” (ASJH; my emphasis). The emphasis here is laid on movement, on journey. Dari and his family are part of a diaspora, where journey counts as much as a static abode. The physical journey is a part of cultural and individual memory that plays a significant role in identity construction. The movement between geographical spaces also implies a movement between cultures, and the journey represents the ‘in-between’. Diasporas are the “Culture’s in-between” (Bhabha, 1996: 53), and journeys therefore are the space that diasporas inhabit. Dari and his family are no different as the documentary reveals, their home is in movement, in the journey.

On a metaphoric level the journey could be interpreted as evolution, as a dynamic process of “becoming” rather than the static state of “being” (Hall, 2003: 112). Dari’s family, as individuals on this journey, do not have fixed static identities, rather they evolve with each geographical and cultural experience, change being the only constant character.

The documentary A Sikh’s Journey Home like the fictional narrative Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee represents dynamic notion of identities, changing with space and time, laying emphasis on the process of ‘becoming’, rather than the end. It does this by destabilising traditional concepts of home, as a static, place of organic belonging, and exploring a fluid, ambivalent notion instead.
3.1.3. Processes of Othering

As the previous analyses show, most representations of British South Asians in contemporary television have embraced postcolonial notions of identity. In addition to depicting them as hybrid, multifaceted, heterogeneous and ambivalent as well as constantly evolving and changing, they challenge and subvert notions of essentialised binary identities, instrumentalised to create hierarchies in racialised representations. It may however be too soon to say that racialised regimes of representations have been overcome completely. In contrast to the previously analysed television texts, the following section concentrates on two television narratives: *The Great British Asian Invasion* and *Life On Mars*. Though very different in genre and content, these two popular television texts succumb to the process of Othering, familiar from colonial as well as postcolonial racialised representations of the Other, through constructing British South Asian identities in opposition to white British identities and establishing a hierarchical power relationship between them. The Channel 4 documentary *The Great British Asian Invasion* in its task of educating British people about the British South Asian diaspora, bears a striking similarity to Edward Said’s understanding of the Orientalist discourse (2001). *Life On Mars*, a fictional narrative on the other hand, tries to be critical of racialised discourses, but the criticism it offers falls short due to the representational strategies it employs when it comes to British South Asian characters, emulating the fetishist creation of stereotypes described by Homi Bhabha in his essay *The Other Question - Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism* (1994: 94-120).

3.1.3.1. The ‘We’ against the ‘Them’: *The Great British Asian Invasion* (Channel 4, 2004)  

The documentary *The Great British Asian Invasion*, produced by Juniper Productions and aired on Channel 4 in a prime time slot, seeks to tell the story of the formation of the South Asian diaspora in Britain. The feature length film is divided into two parts. The first part concentrates on the immigration of people of South Asian origin to Britain, i.e. the first generation British South Asian diaspora. The second part focuses on the British South Asians, born and bred in Britain, the second and the third generations of the British South Asian diaspora. The clear structure is then further emphasized with each part being divided into four segments, featuring

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* All quotes from *The Great British Asian Invasion* (*GBAI*) are self-transcribed.
thematically generalised trends with regard to aspects of the professional lives of the British South Asian diaspora.

Stylistically, the film combines segments from other older documentary (sometimes with a narrator of their own, and often black and white), footage from news reports, sequences from fictional films (e.g., *The Millionairess*, *East Is East*) and TV series (e.g., *Goodness Gracious Me*, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, *Mind Your Language*) with new, contemporary footage and graphics in a montage to create fast-paced narrative. It also features interview segments with various members of the British South Asian diaspora including celebrities like Meera Syal, Hanif Kureishi, Shobhana Gulati, Art Malik and Sanjeev Bhaskar, as well as white British interviewees like Conservative politician Lord Norman Tebbit, famous for his cricket test,\(^{60}\) celebrity chef Anthony Worrall Thompson, creating what seems like a multi-voiced narrative, presenting views from all angles and perspectives. Tying together these various elements is, however, an extradiegetic narrator, who elaborates and comments on the visuals, and directs the flow of the narrative telling the “story” (*GBAI*) of the British South Asian diaspora. This particular role of the narrator is established in the very first sequence of the documentary.

*The Great British Asian Invasion* begins with a short excerpt from *The Two Ronnies*, a comedy sketch featuring Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, aired on BBC 1 from 1971 to 1987. The clip depicts Ronnie Barker dressed as a Sikh man doing a mock cookery show. The point of the joke he cracks lies in the fact that numerous spices that go into Indian cooking could be easily substituted by an Oxo cube, which can be found throughout Britain with no difficulty. Furthermore, he confuses names of the ingredients, replacing names of Indian spices with that of a British shoe shop (Freeman Hardy Willis). The comedy created here could be understood in two ways. Firstly, Ronny Barker’s act of mimicry of a South Asian could signify white ignorance of Indian cooking and, in extension, of culture. Secondly, the clip could also be read as a trivialising act through homogenising (substitution of numerous spices by the Oxo cube) of a complex, heterogeneous culture. The ambivalence in meaning created here through the many possible interpretations is, however, interrupted in the favour of essentialising clarity, as the female narrator’s voice takes over, asking the question whether Ronnie Barker is a racist, and promptly answering it herself with a definite no, bringing an authority into play.

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\(^{60}\) Norman Tebbit’s cricket test for Britishness involved checking whether British citizens who originated from the ex-colonies cheered for England or not in case of a cricket match between England and their countries of origin.
The following sequence is composed of images of contemporary Britain’s South Asian communities. One of the first images shown in the sequence is that of a mosque with an airplane flying over it, invoking the memory of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers in New York. This association of Islam with terrorism, a frightening yet popular belief, is partly confirmed when the narrator then talks of the 9/11 attack, while images of British South Asians in Guantanamo are shown, giving rise to fears “of living with the enemy within” (GBAI). To calm these fears by providing extensive information on the immigration of South Asians to Britain and the lives of their progeny appears to be the purpose of the documentary.

Following a pedagogic style, the film, in its first half, attempts to present an overview of the immigration of people of South Asian origin to Britain. While doing this, a primary concern of the narrative is to differentiate between people from different countries of origin and not club them under the homogenised title of ‘British Asians’. The narrator emphasizes this: “To begin with, the people we usually lump together as Asians are actually different groups from different countries, who came here at different times to do different things” (GBAI). In doing so it posits itself distinctly in opposition to the older documentaries it cites from, where British South Asians have been lumped together as one group.\(^6\) It cites one such documentary with overt racist tones. The male narrator of this old black and white documentary states: “In colour they are much lighter than the Negro people but in many ways they seem even more alien to their British hosts” (GBAI). The self-reflexive citation works to create distance between the old and the new documentary. It also introduces the word alien, which was a term used also to denote a foreigner, and its connotations and implications are discussed in interview segments with Meera Syal, Ziauddin Sardar, Lord Tebbit and Anthony Worrall Thompson. While the discussion includes multiple perspectives emerging from different individual experiences on the matter, all are in agreement on the racist connotations of the term. The narrator takes over soon, “Today Asians are the largest minority group in the country, but it seems that some attitudes have hardly changed” (GBAI; my emphasis). Following this, small snippets of interviews are shown with people on the street (mostly white British, one black British) exhibiting controversial (what some

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\(^6\) Hilary P. Dannenberg notes in her analysis of The Great British Black Invasion (2006) the use of the same technique of distancing from “mid-twentieth-century stereotyping and ignorance” that is employed in The Great British Asian Invasion (2011: 86). Incidentally and as the names suggest, both texts are produced by Juniper Productions.
might even consider racist) attitudes towards the South Asian presence in Britain. “They are foreigners. Aren’t they?” (GBAI) says one. The narrator’s choice of words in the lines preceding these interviews works towards establishing that her own attitude is different. Using such techniques the filmmakers try to create a ‘non-partial’, matter of fact voice, narrating all sides of the story. Similarly, remaining true to what a documentary is supposed to do – present facts in a non-partial way – the documentary through the individual genealogies of the members of the South Asian diaspora, exhibits the diversity that the essentialist term Asian reduces. It is this diversity that the narrator goes on to explore by introducing in the first half of the documentary four groups of immigrants from the South Asian subcontinent.

Starting with the story of the Indian doctor, the film goes on to the Bangladeshi cooks and restaurateurs, followed by the corner shop owners who immigrated in the 60s and the 70s from East Africa and then finally the Pakistani factory workers. Each section has one or more representative of these specific professions and countries whose individual experiences are narrated. For instance, the first section on the Indian doctors follows Dr. Keval Singh Bijral, who talks about his decision to move to Inveraray, in Scotland, a place he had visited on holiday a decade earlier, and had remained in his memory because of midges; he now works there. The narrator’s voice over accompanies his narrative tying his individual story to that of many doctors who travelled from India to the UK.

Dr. Bijral looks after all 1150 residents of Inveraray, but his decision to brave the midges is only part of the story. Dr. Bijral did his medical training in the Punjab, a state in India. What brought him to Britain is a little known tale, driven by cold war paranoia, postcolonial politics and a deliberately engineered exodus of doctors from South Asian, by a man known best for his anti-immigration views, Enoch Powell (GBAI).

The change from the individual to the collective, with input of various facts and figures, and historical information, is swift. Other individual narratives, like that of the actress Shobhna Gulati, are also brought in to collaborate the main thread maintained throughout the section on “the Indian doctor” by the narrator. She then explains Enoch Powell’s (former Health Minister) selective anti-immigration stance, further exploring the high demand for doctors in the British National Health Service, the subsequent migration of doctors from the subcontinent (where the education system was similar to the British) to the UK, and finally the lack of career options left
to these doctors due to prejudice and racism. The narrator’s verdict at end of the section states: “The Indian doctor is one of the great immigration success stories” (GBAI).

Yet another success story, though not of the same magnitude as “the Indian doctor” (GBAI), is that of the Bangladeshi restaurateurs and cooks who are, according to the documentary, responsible for the curry boom in Britain. The section on their story follows a pattern similar to that of the Indian doctor, with personal individual narratives intertwined with the narrator’s general overview, expert opinions and historical information.

The montage style continues with the voice over of the narrator and interviews through the next two sections which follow – the East African Asian immigrants who became entrepreneurs (corner shop holders and jewellers) and the Pakistani factory workers who settled in the North.

On the one hand the documentary attempts to exhibit the diversity among the first generation immigrants from South Asia by delineating their countries of origin. It hence tries to represent the South Asian diaspora in Britain as heterogeneous group of people who cannot be “lumped together” (GBAI) under the term Asian. On the other hand it simplifies this differentiation by attributing a particular profession to immigrants from each country, with no mention of any other aspects that contribute to the diversity of this diaspora. The representation of British South Asians follows an archetypical pattern, with clear simple facts and individual examples to support these facts. The use of generalised designations like “the Indian doctor”, “the Bangladeshi cook”, “the East African shop owner”, and “the Pakistani factory worker” (GBAI), in addition to the caricatures used to represent them repeatedly as well as the map charting out the routes of immigration, works towards emphasizing this archetypical representational style. The generalisations are extremely reductive as they obliterate any possibility difference within each of these individual groups and therefore can be considered as essentialist.

At the end of the first half of the documentary, the narrator summarizes and rates the success of these clearly demarcated groups in a countdown fashion, with the Pakistani factory worker being at the bottom of the ladder and the Indian doctor at the top, creating a hierarchy on the basis of successful ‘integration’. The voice of the narrator in this sequence is accompanied again by caricatures and maps illustrating the conclusions visually. The drawing of definite
unwavering conclusions by the narrator, fixed not just through the voice over but in fact through visual graphics, emphasizes the authoritative claim on knowledge that the documentary makes on British South Asian diaspora. This knowledge that the documentary wants to impart to its viewers is further validated as an absolute by the fact that the narrative voice is constructed, as described earlier, as impartial and matter-of-fact.

The second half of the documentary deals with the second generation of British South Asians - those who were born and raised in Britain. In the same pedagogic style that is strongly apparent in the first half, the second half strives to classify the “complicated” identities of the second generation through the “ways they have made an impact on British life” (GBAI) and not through their region of origin as in the case of the first generation. “You can forget about Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, the next generation are all British” (GBAI). The emphasis on the complexity in the process of understanding British South Asians of the second generation, established early on in this section by the narrator, loses its impact, with the documentary reverting to caricatures in the process of simplification and categorisation. The narrator offers the audience four different classifications again through which second generation British South Asians seem to have made an impact on Britain. The documentary first talks of the professional British South Asians, who are mostly doctors and accountants; secondly, the rebels, who appear to have gone against their parents’ wishes and taken up professions in media and have become artists; the third, those who are interested in sports; and the fourth, who make their impact on Britain through their practice of Islam. Confirming, through a series of interviews, popular beliefs of education as being very important for the parents of young British South Asians, the documentary then moves onto focus heavily on the representation of people of South Asian origin in British audio-visual media, its history and the contemporary scene, where British South Asians appear to be changing the landscape of British media with films, television and music. The third category, that of sport, particularly football, as projected in the documentary, seems to suffer from a lack of representation from British South Asians; however, the scenario is portrayed as slowly changing with time. The optimistic nature of this increasingly positive impact of British South Asians in the areas of British life changes drastically in the context of the fourth category, “a fast growing band of young Asians putting up their own barriers against British culture” (GBAI; my emphasis). The narrator does emphasize the fact that the
fundamentalists form only a small section of the South Asian diasporic community and criticizes repeatedly the stereotype of the “militant Muslim” (GBAI), which is becoming more and more popular. Through this section, the documentary becomes more investigative, with the narrator repeatedly asking questions and allowing the members of the British Muslim communities to answer. The sequences inform audience about the reaction of the British Muslim community to Salman Rushdie’s book *The Satanic Verses*, their anger being projected as the cause of not just book burnings soon after the publication of the book but also riots over a decade later just prior to the attack on the world trade centre in New York in September 2001. Through an interview with Ziauddin Sardar the allegations of blasphemy on the book are discussed, but in other interviews (Lord Tebbit, Kate Fox, Lord Parekh) the outburst of British Muslims is characterised as extremist. The book burnings are described further as evoking memories of the Nazis during the Second World War by the narrator. Remaining true to its style, the documentary shifts its focus to an individual (other than the celebrity participants who are interviewed throughout), Murad Hussein, who owns a shop in Bradford, the narrator’s voice taking over to introduce him.

23 year old Murad Hussein’s family have run a shop on the same road in Bradford for over 15 years. The book burnings and the riots took place within minutes of his house. His generation is as capable of producing doctors and DJs as it is of breeding aspiring terrorists. He has chosen to be a devout and law abiding Muslim. So why are others choosing a more extreme interpretation of Islam? (GBAI).

The need to understand and explain this change seems to be the focus of this part of the documentary, and many views on the subject are offered by the various interviewees from both within and outside the specific community. The ‘fair’, ‘non partial’ nature of the documentary is again maintained through questioning style of the narrator, and through the presence of multiple voices that attempt to explain and answer. The documentary then thematises how not just the white British but other non-Muslim South Asian British people do not want to associate with British Muslims anymore. Following this, the narrator summarises at the end of the section: “At the moment it is only Muslims who are being asked tough questions about how much are we prepared to tolerate and how much loyalty do we should expect. But these are questions that all second generation Asians will ultimately find themselves having to answer” (GBAI; my emphasis). In spite of the inclusion of multiple voices and individual narratives throughout the documentary, what stands out in this last summarizing sentence is the use of the pronoun ‘we’.
The ‘we’ clearly does not include either the Muslims or the second generation British South Asians, who have to be tolerated and are expected to be loyal. Who does this ‘we’ represent?62

In fact from the very onset of the documentary, the narrator uses distinctive pronouns when addressing the different groups of people. There appears a “we” as opposed to a “them” (*GBAI*). The “we” seems to represent ‘white Britain’, and the “them” appear to be ‘British Asians’. In addition to this, there appears a “you” – a direct addressing of the audience. By using such pronouns the narrator establishes a binary, the Self (the “we” and “you”) or white Britain and the Other (British Asians or “them”). This marked dichotomising tendency intensifies even further as the narrator says “Tonight, we bring you our user’s guide to all things Asian” (*GBAI*; my emphasis), manifesting her authority on the subject and objectifying (through the use of the word ‘user’) and reducing the British South Asian diaspora to completely knowable entity (through the use of the word ‘all’). It also sets the pedagogic tone that this documentary film adopts. Information provided in the documentary is clearly structured into sections, with graphics to accompany and simplify, and repeated summaries after every individual section resembles what one would encounter in a school book meant to ‘educate’.

The documentary film at first glance does attempt to break stereotypes by providing information and showing that British South Asians are a heterogeneous group, a point that Dannenberg also makes in her analysis of *The Great British Black Invasion* (2011: 85-87, 90). It makes an effort to be non-partial by including multiple voices through interviews, and distancing itself from previous ‘racist’ texts. However, its clearly delineated and rigid structure and its claim to explain the British South Asian diaspora in utmost precision and clarity, when viewed in conjunction with the systematic ‘othering’ by narrative voice, is extremely problematic.

*The Great British Asian Invasion* resembles very closely the Orientalist discourse criticized by Edward Said in his works *Orientalism* (2001) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) not just in its purpose, which appears to be a project of enlightenment on the subject of British South Asians, but also its pedagogic structure and style, which intends to educate by presenting knowable information through an authoritative narrative voice. Not just is the British South

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62 Hilary P. Dannenberg addresses this technique of Othering with the use of the segregating narrative voice in her analysis of *The Great British Black Invasion* (2006). In her words, “The Great British Black Invasion despite of signs of a spirit of contemporary multiculturalism, bear the cultural or rhetorical marks of a narrative authored by the ‘we’ of the white British establishment” (2011: 85-87, 90).
Asian the Other of the white British narrator but the white narrator is the authority over British South Asians in present day Britain (as the Occident has been over the Orient in the past).

The only thing that remains ambivalent in the documentary is its title “The Great British Asian Invasion”, capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways. The choice of the word ‘invasion’, in the context of the immigration of South Asians to Britain, could be understood, on the one hand, as the arrival of large numbers of people; on the other hand, it could also signify a hostile entry into a country with the intention of conquering it. In the latter sense, its use is rather ironic, considering Britain’s own imperial past. Further, the multiple possible connotations of the word ‘great’ also lend to both positive and negative interpretations. ‘Great’ could stand for Great Britain, or it could be an adjective for the word invasion, where it could refer either to the magnitude of the invasion, or positively to its quality.

3.1.3.2. The Fetish and the Stereotype: Life On Mars (BBC, 2006-2007) 63

The series Life On Mars, which combines the genres of police procedural and time travel, ran for two series of eight episodes each on BBC in 2006 and 2007. Its immense success can be noted not just by the production of the spin off Ashes To Ashes but even more in the use of one of its protagonists, Gene Hunt in election campaigns of both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party in the British general elections of 2010. The campaign pitted two perspectives on the character against each other, and reflecting the ambivalence in meanings that this nostalgic series may evoke (Dannenberg, 19 May 2010). 64 Conceptualised by Ashley Pharaoh, Matthew Graham and Tony Jordan, the narrative tells the story of Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) Sam Tyler (John Simm) from the year 2006 who works at the Manchester police division, Hyde. Sam has a car accident and wakes up in the year 1973, to find himself working at a lower rank of Detective Inspector (DI) at another Manchester police division, Railway Arms, under DCI Gene Hunt (Phillip Glenister). Not knowing what has happened, Sam describes his disoriented situation in

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63 All quotes from Life On Mars (LOM) are self-transcribed.
64 The Labour election campaign of 2010 included a poster with David Cameron replacing Gene Hunt sitting on the Audi Quattro (the car that replaces Life On Mars’ Ford Cortina in spin off Ashes To Ashes, BBC, 2009-2010), with a caption saying “Don’t let him take Britain back to the 1980s” highlighting one interpretation of Gene Hunt as regressive equated here with the Thatcherism of 80s Britain. As a response a poster published by the Conservative Party showed Cameron similarly sitting on the car with the slogan “Fire up the Quattro. It’s time for change.” Here Hunt’s character is used to signify revolutionary not shackled by stagnant social norms, willing to possibly break rules to instigate change. (Dannenberg, 19 May 2010)
the following words which accompany the opening title of every episode: “My name is Sam Tyler. I had an accident and I woke up in 1973. Am I mad, in a coma or back in time? Whatever’s happened, it’s like I’ve landed on a different planet. Now maybe, if I can work out the reason I can get home” (LOM). Whilst each episode depicts a new case in 1973 that Sam and his colleagues try to solve, the narrative maintains continuity throughout both series, one and two, through Sam’s connection to 2006, and his repeated attempts to get back.

To Sam the policing methods of 1973 are not just alien but wrong. Gene Hunt and his colleagues, who embody the system of 1973, work instinctively, often getting results by beating up suspects instead of questioning them. In contrast Sam sticks by his calculated, well thought out and, most of all, fair methods of policing. The policing system of 1973 is represented in particular through the character Gene Hunt who often makes sexist and racist comments, and is portrayed as completely callous. This is totally unacceptable to Sam, who comes from 2006, where multiculturalism and the associated political correctness reign, and institutional racism seems to have been wiped out. The title song by David Bowie that Sam is listening to when his life changing accident occurs describes in a nutshell the policing situation of 1973 as represented in the series in a self-reflexive way.

Take a look at the lawman,
beating up the wrong guy.
Oh man! Wonder if he’ll ever know
he’s in the best selling show. (LOM)65

However, in spite of the criticism that Sam’s perspective offers on Gene Hunt’s character and the system of 1973, it is finally a combination of both Gene’s instinct and Sam’s sophistication and evidence-based methods that leads to the success that Railway Arms has in catching criminals in each episode.

Among other characters that make up the world of 1973’s Railway Arms are Ray Carling (Dean Andrews), who follows in the line of his governor, Gene Hunt, using blunt methods, expressing sexist and racist attitude and Chris Skelton (Marshall Lancaster), a younger police officer who is more open to Sam’s opinion. Annie Cartwright (Liz White), the main female

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65 If Sam is considered the hero of the series, then Gene embodies the anti-hero. In this light, the positive use of the Gene’s highly questionable character in the Tory campaign of 2010 as described in the previous footnote (65) compounded with their subsequent victory in the democratic general election could be seen as a reflection of contemporary Britain’s problematic social mood, especially with regard to its multi-ethnic reality and gender equality.
protagonist is Sam’s confidant and friend in the beginning, with whom he can speak openly about his situation of being stuck in a world, where he does not belong. Their friendship develops through the series into a romantic relationship, and in the final episode, when Sam manages to go back to his world of 2006, his love for Annie forces him to return to 1973.

With regard to representation of ethnic minorities, the series thematises the state of multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain of 1973 through various means. Plots of entire episodes are situated in various ethnic immigrant communities like episode 3 of series 1. Here the case is of a murder in a factory where a number of Irish immigrants work. Gene Hunt’s instinctive answer is to beat a confession out of an Irish worker. It is Sam who recognises that the man is innocent and has been set up, and makes it possible for the team to catch the real killer. Gene and his junior, Ray, and their methods are not just represented as primitive, but the ease with which they draw direct conclusions with no compunctions at all that the immigrant community is responsible for crime, shows the institutional racism of 1973. Sam, however, with his fair and politically correct perspective of 2006, has the ability to look past stereotypes that Gene and Ray get stuck in, and draw logical conclusions and get results.

Similarly, episode 6 of the 2nd series is dedicated to the British South Asian community, though the first British South Asian character has already been introduced in the very first episode of Life On Mars. Here in the opening sequence, Sam in 2006 has had a relationship with Maya Roy (Archie Panjabi), a colleague at Hyde, and though it seems to have ended between them, it has been the cause of some friction at work. After a disagreement, when Maya tries to pursue a potential killer on her own, Sam follows her to protect her and suffers the accident that lands him in 1973 (LOM, Series 1, Episode 1).

Episode 6 of series 2 begins with Sam hearing Maya’s voice, as he often hears voices of family members and others from his life in 2006. This is the first mention of Maya since the opening episode of Life On Mars in the series. As a former girlfriend, one could argue, she has quite conveniently disappeared from Sam’s thoughts and hence from the series until this moment, leaving Sam to pursue his 1973 romantic interest, Annie Cartwright.

The episode continues with Sam, Gene, Annie and Chris arriving in their Ford Cortina at a crime scene. A man lies, apparently murdered, on the floor and Ray, having been the first there, describes what has happened.
Ray: When I got here, another one of them was running out of the back. I couldn’t catch him.
Sam: Did you not get a description?
Ray: Yeah I told you, Paki. Come on.
Sam reacts disapprovingly.
Sam and Ray (together): They all look the same. (LOM, Series 2 Episode 6)

The conversation exhibits, a typical exchange of words between Sam and his colleagues from 1973. Ray’s racist attitude towards coloured people is typical for not just his character, but also, as the series portrays, for the time and setting. Sam pre-empts Ray’s excuse for not getting a description and disapproves of it from his 2006, multiculturally informed and hence, ‘politically correct’ standpoint. Furthermore, Ray’s comment that all people of South Asian origin or belonging to any ethnicity “look the same” (LOM, Series 2, Episode 6) could be considered a stereotypical racist comment.

The victim here is Deepak Gandhi, whom Annie discovers not to be dead after all, but seriously wounded. A recent immigrant to the UK, Deepak, a Ugandan Asian, had been forced to leave Uganda during Idi Amin’s reign. He runs a record shop with his brother, Ravi, and is in a relationship with Leslie Roy, who goes by the name of Lyla Dylan, a white British woman.

With the discovery of heroin on Deepak’s body it is quite clear to Gene that this is a drug related crime. Deepak, a drug dealer, has probably irritated some other more established drug dealers in Manchester, and has been shot because of the rivalry. To Sam he says: “It doesn’t take a degree in applied bollocks to know what’s going on. He’s come over here, started dealing. Rocket or one of the other local drugs boys has took offence and offed him” (LOM, Series 2, Episode 6). Sam disagrees and thinks Deepak’s attempted murder is a racially motivated hate crime, and wants to pursue this line of enquiry. Alone, he finds out that the National Front have been harassing the Gandhi brothers and looks for leads in the Ugandan Asian community. Gene, however, is convinced that Deepak and his brother Ravi are involved in drug trafficking. Finally, the plot is resolved when with a lead provided by an NF member, Sam and Gene realise that members of the Ugandan Asian community are involved in smuggling family possessions into the country, and another known criminal has been using their shipments to smuggle the drugs. It is revealed that Deepak found out about this and therefore had to be silenced.

Like many British police procedural series of the 2000s (New Tricks, BBC, 2003-present, Silent Witness, BBC 1996-present, Law and Order, ITV, 2009-present etc), Life On Mars also
dedicates one solitary episode to the largest British ethnic minority, i.e. British South Asians. This episode does not just thematise the racism faced by British South Asians in 1973, but judges this through the character of Sam Tyler, who comes from the ‘politically correct’ world of 2006. The three main British South Asian characters represented in the episode are Deepak and Ravi Gandhi and Maya Roy. Whilst Deepak, as the victim of an attempted murder, lies in a coma in the hospital, it is Ravi Gandhi, his brother who is the only character of South Asian descent from the world of 1973, who gets a voice. He is initially the chief suspect in the crime, and, being pursued on the one hand by the police and on the other by the actual perpetrators, spends most of his time in hiding. When Sam and Gene finally track him down and question him and realise that he is innocent, his status in the plot turns drastically from potential perpetrator of the crime to that of the victim. He, unlike his brother Deepak, is able to speak and describes the events. According to him, when he arrived at the shop premises, he found Deepak shot and saw a white person leaving and also ran. He thus in his own words “abandoned [his] brother” (LOM, Series 2, Episode 6). When asked for a description of the person leaving the premises, he, says “They all look the same” (LOM, Series 2, Episode 6). The subtle irony of the comment, especially when seen in juxtaposition to the comment made by Ray earlier in the series, hints at the possibility of agency that this character may possess. However, when it is announced that Deepak has died in the hospital, Ravi’s grief takes over any attempt of his to actively participate in the investigation. The sequence showing him crying is accompanied by extradicetic music typical to scenes of grief in Bollywood films. The irony of his earlier comment and the agency that it could reflect gets throttled as the narrative through the music confines him to a particular box. In the diegesis of the narrative, Ravi is called the “groovy one” (LOM, Series 2, Episode 6). He, with his brother, has opened a record business and plans to open a nightclub. Music, therefore, is most certainly an important part of his life. Inferring from the records they sell as well as the music that Gene and Sam play for Ravi in the hospital in the final scene of the episode, Ravi’s taste in music is not necessarily Bollywood music. The extradicetic influence however in this sequence undermines the diegetic characterisation of Ravi Gandhi. It reveals the oversimplified, one-dimensional associations (that could qualify as a stereotype) with people of South Asian origin that the series unwittingly succumbs to more than once.
Moreover, it is last time the audience hears Ravi speak as, soon after the news of Deepak’s death, Gene’s own story of losing his brother to drugs is revealed to explain his particularly strong vendetta against drug traffickers.

It is Sam and Leslie (to a lesser extent) who actually defend the cause of anti racism. Sam berates Gene and Ray on several occasions, when they are being prejudiced and Leslie exposes the harassment the brothers have faced by NF. Together they represent the sole active anti-racist front. Other minor characters of South Asian origin form the representatives of the Ugandan Asian community and are involved in smuggling. Their victim status is illustrated through their being not just harassed by the NF but also being used by drug traffickers. Their utter helplessness is compounded by the fact that the narrative does not offer them a chance to speak, foregrounding the conclusion that they need the likes of Sam and Leslie to defend them.

The only other character of South Asian descent who speaks in the episode is Maya Roy, Sam’s former girlfriend from 2006. However, she receives similar treatment as Ravi Gandhi by the narrative. While Sam investigates the racial angle of the crime he tries to look closer at the Ugandan Asian community. This leads him to enter a house, a room where some people of South Asian origin are (unsurprisingly) watching a Bollywood film. The screen shows an actress dressed as a traditional Hindu bride. As is normally the case with Sam’s communication with 2006 being through media like television and radio, it is hardly surprising that Sam suddenly sees Maya on the screen instead of the actress, who then starts speaking to him.

**Maya:** I don’t know if you can hear me Sam. So maybe it doesn’t matter.
**Sam:** It does matter.
**Maya:** I love you, Sam. But that’s the trouble. When someone you love dies you can say good bye and go through the stages you go through and move on. You are still here, Sam, and nothing is getting better.
**Sam:** Maya, you look great.
**Maya:** I am going to stop coming to see you, Sam. I am sorry.
**Sam:** No (*LOM*, Series 2, Episode 6).

The scene reflects an emotional conversation between former partners on the one hand, with Maya expressing the need to end the relationship, however not being able to hear Sam’s protests. Though Sam has often communicated with other people close to him in 2006 in previous

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66 The representation here emulates the notion of Asians as ‘social problems’ with special emphasis on drug trafficking as explored by Dhillion Kashyap (1988-122), who is quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Pines adds the status of ‘victims’ to the trend of representations of Black Britons (2001: 179).
episodes through media like radio and television, Maya has never been one of them. The sudden burst of extreme emotion on Sam’s part is hence on the one hand understandable, and yet questionable in sincerity. Partially of South Asian descent as is discovered further in the episode, Maya is born and bred in Britain, far removed from the sub-continent of South Asia. It is further revealed that her father is Deepak Gandhi, who dies before her birth and her mother Leslie Roy who has brought her up. Maya even carries her mother’s surname, which could be understood as an indicator of the minimal influence her father or his genealogy, maybe even his culture has had on her identity. Her superimposition on the actress of clear South Asian descent, in a South Asian film, hence becomes problematic. It reveals what acclaimed postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha describes as the nature of a stereotype in his essay "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" in the collection Location of Culture (1994: 94-120).

The process of Othering and stereotyping according to Bhabha is an ambivalent process which functions on the principles of recognition on the one hand and disavowal on the other, much like Sigmund Freud’s concept of fetishism. According to Freud, for a young boy, the fear of castration arises in the moment that he recognises that his mother does not have a penis. To substitute this sexual difference from his mother, the boy uses a fetish, which could take any form. Fetishism therefore rests on the principle of recognising the sexual difference, but refusing to acknowledge it and instead substituting it. Bhabha suggests that stereotypes function in a similar way, and in the case of the colonial discourse, the Coloniser constructs the Other as a uniform essentialised category by the disavowal of difference, the visual sign i.e. skin (race) functioning as the fetish (Bhabha, OQ, 1994: 94-120).

The sequence described above illustrates this understanding of the process of Othering. The white male protagonist Sam in his projection of Maya on the Bollywood actress, completely disregards any possibility of difference between the both. The fetish, i.e. skin, is the visual marker of similarity and the sole binding aspect, while the cultural and individual differences, as can be inferred from Maya’s genealogy elaborated earlier, is disavowed. Aspects of Maya’s hybrid cultural identity and most of all her British heritage are completely excluded, and Maya as well as the actress become the homogenised, essentialised Other. Difference here is not just
expressed in the categories of sex, with Maya being Sam’s female Other but is inscribed through her skin as she becomes his racial Other.

Looking at the plot it may be argued that this process of Othering, which occurs through this one dimensional, representation of Maya, is completely contained within Sam’s projection. However, Sam’s characterisation as the radically fair, fore-runner of an anti-racist agenda from a more progressive Britain of 2006 in contrast to Gene Hunt’s and Ray Carling’s outright racist personalities of 1973 signals that this process of Othering transcends the individual nature of Sam’s own imagination of Maya, to the representation of this British South Asian character in the series.

Furthermore, when Maya’s representation in this sequence is viewed in juxtaposition with what has been described earlier with regard to Ravi, the repetitiveness of the association of Bollywood with people of South Asian origin, whether or not from South Asia, becomes profound. Whether this association with Bollywood is evaluated as positive or negative is besides the point, it is the fact that in both cases skin colour becomes the sole basis for this association that is significant. The repetition also illustrates the process by which stereotypes try to maintain stability and validity as ‘truths’ in the discourse, another factor noteworthy in Bhabha’s understanding of the ambivalence of the process of Othering (OQ, 1994: 95).

Sam’s protesting Gene’s and Ray’s racist attitudes and, with it, the critical perspective on racism that this episode of Life On Mars intends to reflect, is completely overshadowed in this light as, at a level higher than of individual characters and their perceptions, the narrative succumbs to racial and cultural stereotyping and processes of Othering similar to those in the colonial discourse.

3.1.4. The Performative Aspect of Identity

As described in chapter one, Stuart Hall among others understands identity of an individual as having an autonomous aspect as well as a discursive. The ‘point of suture’ that is needed in the articulation of identity forms when individuals are ‘hailed’ by the discourse. It is this process of hailing by the discourse that takes on the form of certain (normative) roles (WNI, 1996: 5-6). In the case of gender identity, as Butler argues, these are normative heterosexual roles are defined by the patriarchal discourse (1999, 2006: 61-71). In case of ethnicity, the roles are prescribed by
the discourses of colonialism and race. The autonomy of the individual lies in the fact that the roles need to be performed actively, the gap between subjectivity and discursively prescribed role needs to be bridged over. This aspect could be understood as performance and entails agency because of its dependency on activity. For Butler, performance of gender can create moments of subversion of normative heterosexual roles, as she explains with her example of drag (1999: 61-71). The following analyses of two television texts, *The Apprentice* and *Silk*, looks at the possibilities that arise for contestation of stereotypical representations of ethnic and cultural groups, when one understands identity as performance/role playing.

Recent developments in global television culture, with the ever increasing popularity of what has come to be known as reality TV, have left an indelible mark not just on commercially driven global satellite/cable television but also Public Service Broadcasting channels (BBC, ITV and Channel 4) in British media landscape. The success of the genre is indicated through the significantly rising number of series that follow this form of factual/documentary production as well as the fact this genre, which formerly was restricted to daytime television, has come to occupy early evening and often primetime slots (Brunsdon, 2003: 7-9). Though available in various hybrid formats, the underlying principle for most reality TV is the representation of ordinary people, not celebrities or stars, interacting with each other in unscripted and therefore not pre-constructed role-play. Psychologically, other than satisfying the voyeuristic desire of the audience in allowing them to view the lives of other ordinary people, the authenticity (reality) claim that the genre carries allows for highly subjective identifications (in its most colloquial use), or non-identifications from the audience, accounting for the popularity of the genre (Orbe, 2008: 348-349).

*The Apprentice* is one such reality show, following the principles of a competitive game, pertaining broadly to the subgenre of lifestyle transformations (Malik, 2011: 48). Originally produced by Mark Burnett in the USA and broadcast on the channel NBC, the series shows

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67 All quotes from *The Apprentice (TA)* are self-transcribed.
68 Though not as clearly located in the subgenre of lifestyle transformations as make over shows are for instance, *The Apprentice* does offer its contestants the chance to compete for a very lucrative job, transforming the life of the winner (Malik: 2011: 48).
business icon Donald Trump look for his new apprentice among more or less qualified participants. These participants, divided into teams, initially are assigned specific weekly tasks, on completion of which they are judged. Each week, i.e. in each episode, one of the participants, the most poorly performing member of the losing team departs from the competition, becoming the victim of the catchphrase “You’re fired” (TA), till finally a winner, i.e. the apprentice, is revealed. The tasks test the participants on their knowledge and aptitude in various branches of business. In 2005, BBC produced its own British version of the show, with Lord Alan Sugar, then Sir, replacing Donald Trump. Following the same principles as the US version, each year has seen a new group of entrepreneurs competing for the coveted position of Lord Sugar’s apprentice.\(^{69}\)

Like other reality TV formats, *The Apprentice* also has a claim to authenticity with its unscripted dialogue that forms the interaction between the various participants as well as the interaction between Lord Sugar and participants. Like other reality TV formats, the “construct” nature of this narrative is revealed in the selection of the participants, the participants’ knowledge of the expectations of the producers and the more general discourse of television and finally the process of skilful editing that creates a coherent narrative (Kilborn, 2003: 74-75). The question of performance then becomes of utmost significance, as the participants of *The Apprentice* like those of other reality game shows, though they articulate their own identities, do this within parameters set by the programme makers. Essentially, the individual participants perform their ‘self (s)’, a process that echoes the understanding of identity located by Stuart Hall as an articulation of subjectivity located at the “suture” (Hall, WNI, 1996: 5-6) between the psychological subjective perspective of the Self and the contextual determinations of the discourse.

Further, as observed by Sarita Malik in the article, *Mainstreaming Cultural Diversity*, these reality game shows mostly function in a colour-blind fashion, i.e. evoking the fantastic

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\(^{69}\) An interesting analysis of the representation of race in the first series of the US version of *The Apprentice* is presented by Stephanie Greco Larson. Larson argues that this representation resorts to stereotypes, concluding: “*The Apprentice* in its first season looked like the rest of America’s mainstream popular culture. It presented race in America as white and black, overlooking the greater range of racial diversity. It created characters that fit dominant racial stereotypes through its contestant selection and video editing. In a variety of ways, it used dominant ideologies to defend and justify the race/sex/class status quo. It did this without most viewers even noticing because the ideologies are so familiar that they seem like common sense. The media help create this common sense through the continued use of racial discourses” (Larson, 2006: 6). This analysis shows that the first series of the British version of *The Apprentice* represents race differently.
message that racial difference does not matter anymore in the real world as depicted in the show. Questions of cultural origin or ethnicity therefore are as a rule not thematised, and every participant is supposed to perform the identity of the “absolute citizen” (2011: 48), where ethnicity becomes a non-issue. Since in an ideal non-racialised, multi-ethnic society, competition for a job like in The Apprentice, should not be affected by ethnicity of the competitors, the “absolute citizen” comes to stand for an individual who represents this world. Interestingly enough, other categories of identities like gender and class are allowed to be articulated and often play significant roles in the game show narratives as the analysis below shows. Malik cites this colour-blind approach as symptomatic of the shift from the multicultural agenda making ethnicity a central focus that public service broadcasting aspired to in the 80s towards a more commercially driven assimilationist philosophy that characterises television discourse today (2011: 48).

The first British series of The Apprentice UK, broadcast in 2005, featured among others four members of coloured British ethnic minorities, among them two of South Asian origin, Raj Dhanota and Saira Khan. These numbers, when viewed in the context of the complete lack of representation or tokenist representations of British South Asians in mainstream television, could be almost considered to be an unprecedented “hyper-visibility” (Malik, 2011: 47). However, adhering to the “absolute citizen” approach these participants are introduced only in categories related with their professional life, Raj Dhanota, an internet entrepreneur and Saira Khan as a sales executive, through the subtitles that accompany their interviews or by the extradiegetic narrator, both components of the narrative that hint at its constructed nature and lie firmly in the hands of the programme makers. Further, they are given the same amount of camera time as any other contestant, and have similar numbers of interview snippets where they express their opinion about the task at hand or the other characters, again factors that are clearly in the realm of the producers of The Apprentice. These interview segments interspersed in the action are unscripted, and often allow for candidates to give the audiences insights into other aspects of their identity. Class and gender are often thematised in these segments as well as playing an important role in the larger framework narrative. During the first couple of weeks of the process, for instance, gender of the participants is the determining factor for the division into teams, Lord Sugar, pitting the men against the women in initial tasks. Class also reveals itself as an important
category in determining the narrative through various contestants’ backgrounds. In episode 5, for instance, James Max is deemed to have an advantage in a bid to secure artists, as he allegedly has a posh background. This is referred to repeatedly during the episode, initially by project manager of the opposing team, Rachel Groves, and later by Saira and Raj who are working together in a sub-team for this task too, a sign of the growing alliance between the two described later. Soon after they discover they have failed to secure a specific lucrative bid and Saira and Raj are disappointed and discuss the possible reasons for their failure.

**Raj**: That whole group is really snotty.

**Saira** (mimicking what could be considered a posh accent): Well, yeah they are. They’ve got Sebastian, who talks very terribly posh, and James, who knows everybody in London. Oh yeah. He must have gone through the list and thought, Victoria and Dane, we had them around for tea the other day, and the person with Goldman Sachs, my mother is related to him and Oh lardy plum! And [they’ve] got Miriam who plays the piano and is Miss Artistic. The whole persona the woman, Nicky (the female artist), she wasn’t even bothered about talking to us. We obviously did not fit their cultural fit. We did not go to Goldsmith College and we did not have a posh bloody accent (*TA*, Series 1, Episode 5).

As the conversations shows, for Raj and Saira (in particular), the reason for the failure to secure the bid lies in the clear fact that they are not “posh” like the members of the other team. According to the Oxford English Dictionary “posh” refers to “typical of or belonging to the upper class” fundamentally linking the members of the other team to a different social milieu than Raj’s and hers. Class difference is the predominant reason they lost the bid in her opinion. What, however, is not articulated here, but could be understood as a subtext of her comment, is ethnic difference. Whereas she and Raj are clearly of South Asian origin, Sebastian, James and Miriam are not. Class difference is thematised overtly but in complete accordance with the colour-blind principle, inferring the play of ethnic difference only remains a possibility.

Apart from the competing candidates, Lord Sugar himself often cites his path to success from meagre beginnings in a council estate in Hackney, London to internationally renowned billionaire and knighted businessman through the many series of *The Apprentice*.

Unlike class or gender, cultural background and ethnicity of participants or of Lord Sugar himself as a member of the minority British Jewish ethnic group does not seem to warrant a mention *The Apprentice*. This emphasizes the fact that this reality show anchors itself in the belief of the ‘absolute citizen’, in a world where ethnicity or race as factors do not play a role in determining identity anymore.
However, in spite of the rigid parameters set by the colour-blind approach where ethnicity and culture do not require a mention, the unscripted dialogue and the course of action allow individuals to perform/voice these aspects of identity. After all as ‘real’ individuals, the participants carry their ethnic identities into the realm of the programme and though they do not explicitly articulate them, they can be seen in the alliances they might form during the episodes (Drew, 2011: 331). Though not ever cited overtly as a reason, this could be understood as a reason for the bond that Raj and Saira form in the series, a friendship that is commented on even by the narrator in the final episode of the series. However episode 3 breaks the conventional silence and allows a glimpse of a performance of ethnicity by the participants as the discourse that surrounds them demands it. Here the task set by Lord Sugar to test the contestants’ negotiating skills involves buying. Each team is assigned a list of items and given a specific budget to buy these in a specific period of time – the team spending the least amount of money and securing the highest number of items wins. Due to a previous corporate reshuffle both participants of South Asian origin Raj and Saira happen to be in one team for this task. One of the items on the list is a free view box, and Raj and Saira along with Paul Torrisi, another member of their team, are assigned to buy this by team captain James Max. In search of this free view box, the three land in an electronics shop, the proprietors of which are also South Asian in origin, more precisely Sikhs. Although till this point in the process the cultural origin of both Saira and Raj has not received a single mention, it becomes the critical in the unscripted action in this particular task of negotiation for the free view box. On entering the shop the negotiations begin, with Saira leading the conversation and Raj following as they try to persuade Mr. Singh to give them a discount. The conversation, initially in English, soon changes to a rapid exchange in Hindi and Punjabi with a little English thrown in. Saira addresses Mr. Singh as “Uncle” (TA, Series 1, Episode 3) a common form of address for an older male person in the subcontinental cultural context, in spite of no actual family relationship. Through the use of Hindi and Punjabi, which is subtitled by the programme makers for the audience’s benefit, and this culturally specific form of address, she performs her ethnic/cultural identity whilst negotiating the deal. Trying to win favour by emphasizing solidarity of the British South Asian community, controversially ignoring internal differences of culture and effectively homogenising on the basis

70 Emily Drew identifies this phenomenon in her analysis of the US reality game show Survivor (2011: 326-346).
of common ethnic origin (Saira being British Muslim, Raj British Hindu and the shopkeepers Sikh) she says explicitly: “We are the Asian team.” (TA, Series 1, Episode 3). She secures the free view box at no cost from the Sikh shopkeepers. This hugely profitable deal, which is the key to the success of the entire team, is based singularly on the performance of ethnic/cultural identities of Saira and Raj, the two British South Asian participants. And when Lord Sugar asks them about the deal during the celebratory dinner later, Saira again emphasizes the ethnic origins that she and Raj share: “It’s the Asian posse over here” (TA, Series 1, Episode 3).

The intended colour-blind approach of the programme is suddenly broken in this segment where ethnicity comes to the forefront and becomes the pivotal aspect of the business transaction. On the one hand, it illuminates the overlapping of various subject positions crucial in understanding of identities as multifaceted. Saira and Raj are not just performing as their professional selves but also as their ethnic/cultural selves in Mr. Singh’s shop. This unscripted segment, hardly three minutes in length, reveals that ethnic difference are an integral part of identity in a genre that aspires to uphold the belief that ethnicity does not matter anymore. It serves as a moment of subversion of the colour-blind approach and the assimilationist ideals that underlie it. Overall it reflects an ambivalence that the series shows with regard to representations of ethnic identities, an ambivalence that comes into existence through gaps created by the vacillation between the scripted and the unscripted, the predominant characteristic of the genre itself.

In this light, the finale of series one of The Apprentice becomes most significant. The series reverts to its former absolute silence on the topic of ethnic difference of the participants after the brief segment in episode 3. After the twelve week long interview process the final two contestants are Black British Tim Campbell and British South Asian Saira Khan, both glaringly visible members of coloured British ethnic minorities yet unacknowledged as such. This exaggeration of the silence to the extent that it elevates the mention of ethnicity to a taboo status, seems to function almost ironically. On the surface, it may seem to validate the idea of a real

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71 Malik also mentions that this colour-blind finale and the fact that Tim Campbell wins the first season could be interpreted positively, especially with respect to audience responses from ethnic minority communities (2011:48-49). Following series of The Apprentice have also featured competitors from ethnic minorities, including British South Asians. The spin-off series Junior Apprentice where teenagers compete against each other to win an investment of 25,000 pounds that Lord Sugar offers, was won in 2009 by a 17 year old British South Asian Arjun Rajyagor.
post-racial, post-ethnic world, however, at the same time, it could be understood as subverting precisely this through the use of ridiculous exaggeration and irony.

3.1.4.2. Undermining Racism through Performance: *Silk* (BBC, 2011) 

Like many other fictional series in contemporary British television that have single episodes dedicated to ethnic minorities and race relations, *Silk*, the acclaimed new legal drama on BBC, thematises contemporary state of British race relations in episode 4 of its very first series. Written by Peter Moffat, well known for previous television productions like *Criminal Justice* (BBC, 2008-2009) and *North Square* (Channel 4, 2000-2001), the series narrates the trials and tribulations in the legal profession, the politics of the job as well as intertwined personal lives of the characters. Martha Costello (Maxine Peake) and Clive Reader (Rupert Penry-Jones) are the leading barristers of their chambers competing for a place on the Queen’s Counsel, i.e. what is also known as taking silk. Though the series has a meta-narrative that runs through the episodes providing continuity, most often each individual episode involves a separate mini-plot generally in the form of a case that the lead characters are working on currently. Episode 4 features one such case that is allocated to Martha Costello, involving misconduct by a police officer, a case she initially does not want to take on as she believes it to be in contradiction with her principles. “I spend my life cross-examining lying police officers” (*Silk*, Series 1, Episode 4). However it turns out that this police officer, Rachna Ali (Syreeta Kumar), is British South Asian and has been accused of calling a fellow policeman, black British PC Johnson a “lazy nigger” (*Silk*, Series 1, Episode 4).

When looked at in the context of the entire series, the restriction of the representation of British South Asians, the largest coloured ethnic minority in Britain to a single character in a single episode seems to follow the tokenist principle, i.e. a superficial effort to tick all the boxes, represent characters from different ethnic minorities, without really making the effort to portray heterogeneity within these groups. In fact even in this single episode, the mini-plot involving Rachna Ali’s case seems overshadowed by developments in the meta-narratives – plots that have carried on from previous episodes. These include the story of one of Martha’s prior clients who

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72 All quotes from *Silk* are self-transcribed.
is now accused of murder; Clive’s trying to join a different set of chambers, and Martha telling Clive that she is pregnant with his child.

Further, even the character constellation, with Rachna finding herself accused and helpless, her only ray of hope being Martha, evokes a heavily racialised hierarchical power structure, with the white woman having to step in and defend the rights of a coloured woman. Martha’s initial reluctance to take up the case gives way gradually in the course of the episode to a championing of rights of ethnic minorities in front of a tribunal consisting of established white police officers, as she realises what Rachna’s comment really means. However, at the outset her attitude towards Rachna’s case seems very detached. She refuses to let Rachna explain the context in which she made the comment. When Rachna says: “It was a joke”, Martha retorts, “What kind of joke? Police canteen in the 1970s kind of joke” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). Her primary concern is the possibility of a winning defence strategy which at this moment seems quite in contrast to the way she feels about other cases she handles and the socio-political causes they represent. When she finds out that her former client Mark Draper has been accused of murder, she wants to, in her own words, “get out of this police thing” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). Her concern for her former client stems from her strong social conscience. “Mark Draper is the reason I do this job. He has had a terrible life and it keeps getting worse. And it has just blown up. And it is him who is on trial, when it should be all those people who have abused him and let him down and made his life so completely hopeless. He is a child and children need looking after” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). As the comment makes clear she is woman who has strong social agenda and jumps to the defence of defenceless people. Trying to get out of the police case, she reasons with Rachna and asks her to “represent [herself]” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4), indeed a chance to reflect agency on the coloured woman’s part. However, Rachna pleads with her on basis of female solidarity in order to acquire representation, relinquishing this possible offer of agency saying: “I want you to fight for me. Please” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). She goes on then to explain in further detail what she meant by the comment being a joke. “It was my way of sending racism up” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). At this Martha shows her first sign of interest.

Martha: What do you mean?

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73 This aspect is similar to Life On Mars, where Sam and Leslie are represented as defending the cause of the ‘victim’ Ugandan Asian community.
Rachna: To sound racist and mean the opposite. What I said is saying this is so racist, it isn’t. It’s undermining racism (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4).

At this point Martha agrees to Rachna’s pleas and spearheads the defence at the tribunal, eventually getting a judgement in Rachna’s favour. Though, as elaborated earlier, the hierarchies of power evoked by the character constellation (Rachna needing Martha to defend her) and maybe even the relinquishment of an offer at agency on the part of Rachna, fit at first glance clearly into a pattern of racialised representations, the act for which Rachna has been accused in itself could be considered a subversive act that breaks these patterns. For Rachna, the use of the term “nigger” in the context of her interaction with fellow black police constable Johnson, who in turn, calls her “my little Paki friend” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4), is an act of intentional and routine performance, rendering the abusive, racist discourse in which these terms are embedded meaningless. The fixed, racialised, historically constituted identities signified through these terms – nigger and Paki – are subverted by the ironic juxtaposition of the ethnicities of the performers. In this ultimate act of subversion, which mere onlookers fail to understand and deem as outright racist, as is shown in the plot, it is hardly deniable that Rachna is an active agent.

By choosing this particular theme as the plot, the narrative opens up the possibility of self-reflexive interpretation. What appears to be a tokenist and therefore racialised mode of representation could be understood as ironic when viewed in juxtaposition with the theme of the conflict. As explained earlier, PC Johnson’s and Rachna’s rehearsed, calculated and intentional routine of calling each other Paki and nigger, is viewed as a performance that works to destabilise historically constituted fixed and stable identities. This thematic emphasis, when considered together with the fact that at a different level, this episode of Silk as such is a performance of a fictional narrative with actors playing parts of characters, creates self-reflexive ambivalence. By making ‘performance’ central to understanding of identities and their relationships to each other, and to acts of undermining fixity of hierarchies, the series entertains the possibility to question what it might appear to do at the first glance, i.e. to fall into patterns of racialised representation.

A further means of avoiding racialised modes of representation that the narrative employs is by emphasizing the notion of multifaceted identities, identities which shift according to contexts they are located in. The Rachna Ali plot brings this to light by emphasizing the presence
of multiple, overlapping solidarities to different subject positions that an individual may encounter in different contexts. As mentioned earlier, Rachna pleads with Martha to take on her case on the basis of female solidarity. She says: “The Met needs women. The police station I work for needs women. You know what it’s like. I want you to fight for me” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4; my emphasis). Her appeal to Martha is based on shared experiences of women in a male-dominated profession.

The ‘crime’ of which Rachna Ali has been accused of exhibits another kind of solidarity, a solidarity she shares with PC Johnson, both belonging to coloured ethnic minorities in the UK which have been victims of racism. This aspect of her identity she does not share with Martha who, though she represents Rachna’s point of view at the tribunal, does not necessarily participate in the act itself.

With other white police officers in the same station Rachna shares yet another form of solidarity, one of a professional kind, clear from the fact that they do not want to act in any way that might cause her harm. When Martha’s pupil goes to the police station Rachna researches background of the incident; one of the policemen refuses to share information whereas another says, “You won’t get anyone here grassing her [Ali] up” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4). Sharing similar professional experience, working together for years at the police station and understanding the relationship between her and Johnson they do not see her as racist, which to an outsider (even to a police officer from a different station) has a complete different connotation. This becomes even more evident at the tribunal, where it becomes clear why the police officers from Rachna Ali’s station did not object to Ali’s comment whereas police officer from another station found it offensive and reported it. Having experienced the death of a black inmate in one of their cells, “the single biggest issue” (Silk, Series 1, Episode 4) at this police station has become race, yet they do not report Ali, understanding the extreme anti-racist intention of her comment.

These different solidarities reflect the different subject positions or facets, – as a woman, as a member of a coloured ethnic minority and as a police officer – all of which contribute to make Rachna’s identity. The overlapping affiliations show that depending on the context, individuals like Rachna perform a particular facet at a particular time more so than others. This shifting performance does not allow for a fixed, stable, representation of identity, rather it
emphasizes the ambivalence of it. In this light, what might appear to be a tokenist representation of British South Asian identity in *Silk*, reveals itself on a more detailed examination as a differentiated, multifaceted and ambivalent representation of identity based on the understanding of performance.

3.1.5. **Overcoming Binaries through Representation of Multiple Subject Positions.**

As the identity model elaborated in chapter one describes, individual identities shift or vary according to the discourse or context that they are currently within. A specific discourse “interpellates” (Hall, WNI: 1996, 5-6) a specific subject position and articulation of identity in this discourse is influenced heavily by this particular subject position. Group identities, and cultural identities as group identities, involve many different individuals, each of whom has varying identities in varying discourses. Sometimes, there might be an overlap in certain aspects, but then there also may be a divergence in others. The recognition that group identities are based on these overlaps and affiliations that are subject to change with changing discourses and contexts, makes the building of binaries and associated stereotypes and hierarchies impossible. Here in contrast to dichotomies, heterogeneity is emphasized. The Self and the Other lose their meanings as fixed and static defining categories, and an ambivalence in Bhabha’s sense of the concept is revealed (MM, 1994: 121-131). The following section looks at this aspect of identity and how it has been represented in two contemporary and highly controversial British television texts, *Britz* and *EastEnders*. Very different in genre and plot from each other, the texts manifest the ideas that cultural identities are ambivalent.

3.1.5.1. **Differentiated, Heterogenous Identities: Britz (Channel 4, 2007)**

The BAFTA award-winning drama series, *Britz*, directed by Peter Kosminsky, tells the story of a young British Muslim brother and sister, Sohail and Nasima Wahid, born in Bradford to Pakistani immigrant parents. The narrative, set in 2007, spans less than a year of their lives and is divided into two parts, relating events over the same period of time but looking at them from different perspectives. The events which determine their individual lives and choices are contextualised by the War on Terror, the introduction of the new British Anti-Terror legislation

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74 All quotes from *Britz* are self-transcribed.
and the resulting increased surveillance of British Muslims. The first part, as its telling title, “Sohail’s story” suggests, concentrates on his development in the course of the events, his views and beliefs and the choices he makes, whereas the second part “Nasima’s story” does the same for his sister. Though each individual story could be viewed as a complete separate narrative in itself, they complement each other by filling in gaps left by the other, to explain the characters and events more thoroughly.

While Sohail studies law in London and, unknown to his family and friends, gets a job as a desk officer with MI 5, his sister Nasima is a politically active medical student in Leeds and still lives at home with their parents and younger brother Rafiq in Bradford. The impact of increased surveillance of British Muslims as a part of prevention of terrorism in the wake of the July 7, 2005 bombings is felt strongly in Bradford, owing to its large British Muslim community of South Asian origin. Many of the Wahids’ acquaintances, including the family of Nasima’s best friend Sabia as well as Sohail’s friend, Sajid, are suspected of being potential terrorists. Though brother and sister sharing similar background, the protagonists’ attitudes towards this controversial state interest in the lives of people they grew up with and know well are completely different from each other. Sohail’s story shows how, as a MI 5 officer, he, who is committed to the democratic process, tries to find information on his friend to aid the uncovering of a terrorist cell suspected of planning another attack on British soil on the anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001. Nasima’s narrative develops as the police arrest and detain Sabia to find out the whereabouts of her brother Imran. Sabia commits suicide because of the treatment meted out to her by the police and her utter helplessness in the face of the new Anti-terror legislation, where due to a control order she has been forbidden all contact with the outside world. The circumstances surrounding Sabia’s death leave Nasima shaken. She begins to believe in playing an active role to help fellow Muslims, which, for her, means a turn to radical Islamism. She joins a group of Jihadist terrorists and becomes a key player – a suicide bomber – in the attack her brother has been working to prevent.

The suspense thriller Britz portrays in its two parts completely different attitudes of British born Muslims of Pakistani origin towards the socio-political developments post-9/11. It thematises the controversial nature of Islamism, the War on Terror, the Anti-Terrorism Laws, and prevalent Islamophobia. But most significantly it raises the question that underlies all these
issues – the question of identity, of affiliations that group identities are based on, affiliations that result from an overlap of subject positions that more than one individual may occupy at the same time. It also raises the questions of heterogeneity of group identities by highlighting the radically different identities that occur within the context not only of a diasporic community, but within a single family, the smallest unit of social (group) life. It further probes the idea of conflicting or compatible subject positions of individual identities by asking the highly controversial and much debated question: What does it mean to be British and Muslim in contemporary Britain? The following analysis looks at these issues as are represented in the drama series.

Only a couple of minutes into part one of the series the idea of affiliation is brought up. Sohail is being driven to Bradford by Shaz (also of South Asian origin), a girl he seems to be romantically interested in, who starts to ask him questions. One of them is: “Why are all your friends white?” (Britz, Part 1). The question alludes to what is at the heart of the debate through the rest of the series. If friendships are viewed as a form of affiliation based on shared aspects among individual identities, then this question is about transgression of historically constituted boundaries which have been a product of segregationist, racist ideologies. It opens up the possibility of various aspects on the basis of which affiliations can be formed, revealing the multiple subject positions that an individual encounters in identity formation, race/ethnicity being only one of them. For the character Shaz, this question could be interpreted as expression of discomfort with the transgression of the boundaries elaborated earlier. The protagonist Sohail’s affirmative answer, however, highlights the fact that ethnicity is not a criteria for him to form affiliations like friendships. Other subject positions he occupies determine his choice of affiliations, reinforcing the notion of identity as multifaceted and therefore heterogeneous.

One of the subject positions Sohail uses to define his identity is Britishness. At several instances he uses principles of exclusion to define this abstract group identity he considers important to his self-definition. The British National Party (BNP) members who beat up his brother, Rafiq, are “scum” (Britz, Part 1) and not British in his view. He says: “They are not this country” (Britz, Part 1). Here being British seems to be based on affiliations among individuals sharing a set of values rather than nationality or ethnicity.

While in Bradford for a weekend, he meets Sabia’s brother, Imran, on the street and they exchange a few words.
Sohail: You all right, Imran? When did you turn into an Arab, man?
Imran: I am wearing my traditional dress, bro, so should you.
Sohail: This isn’t your traditional dress. I swear you grew up with us and not some fucking ghetto in Gaza (Britz, Part 1).

Imran who is dressed in a traditional outfit is certainly denying his identity implied through the experience of growing up in Bradford, in his choice of clothing, according to Sohail. Arabs from Gaza dress the way Imran is dressed, and not people who grew up in Bradford, UK. Sohail appeals to the shared experience of growing up in Bradford to form an affiliation with Imran, who seems to consider other affiliations more significant to his identity at the moment. These exchanges highlight that ambivalence is an integral part of group identities which are affiliations based on overlapping subject positions. They question processes of Othering that are used to construct clearly demarcated binary identities.

It is also in this regard that a further instance in the series is of interest. After attending a group meeting with Shaz, where a “Muslim scholar” (Britz, Part 1) offers an interpretation of the Covenant of Security mentioned in the Koran that justifies British-born Muslims taking military action on British soil, Sohail who is very upset, gets into an argument with Shaz.

Sohail: What a load of crap? How can you agree to do that?
Shaz: Do what?
Sohail: Sit behind a screen like some bloody servant. How can any self-respecting woman agree to do that?
Shaz: It’s because of respect that they ask us to sit there.
Sohail: Total bollocks! Lapped up by a bunch of pig-ignorant morons. All wearing robes because what? Does God find English clothes offensive? ‘She’s not wearing a head scarf; the Devil’s walked in amongst us!’
Shaz: Calm down, Sohail. You’re overreacting.
Sohail: I’m overreacting. Half those pricks were ready to strap up Semtex.
Shaz: It’s easy for you to keep your English cool, but maybe if you’d grown up in the Middle East, like he did, if you sister had been raped, your mother tortured and your father murdered, maybe you would feel a little bit differently about it.
Sohail: Go to Palestine, Shaz. I guarantee you, there are more English people standing in front of bulldozers to protect Palestinian homes than Muslims. More whites marched against the Iraq war than Muslims. I know because I was there. Were you? If people don’t like it here they can leave. Let’s see if they like it any better in Pakistan which happens to be a military dictatorship, by the way (Britz, Part 1; my emphasis).

To begin with, Sohail’s comment about the acceptance of the physical separation of sexes at the meeting as something “any self respecting woman” would not accept is not only an outright
personal insult to Shaz, but it represents a rather judgemental and hegemonic perspective on the issue of women’s rights in Islam. This judgement, which imposes a set of specific cultural values as the norm, is undeniably a product of viewing cultures as separate monads (with no possibility of confluence) in a hierarchical relationship. In contrast, Shaz, uses the pronoun “they” in her retort to Sohail’s comment, signifying that she does not include herself in this group. However, there is an ambiguity in meaning here as the “they” could signify ‘men’, in opposition to herself or ‘women’ or even this particular group of people and the ideology they seem to represent. Though the use of “they” might be interpreted as a process of Othering, the plurality of the subject positions that this “they” could be considered an Other makes the construction of a fixed, stable identity impossible. Further ambivalence is created through her accusation that “it’s easy for [Sohail] to keep his English cool.” To what degree she sees herself as English (presumably born and bred like him in Bradford) remains ambiguous. She does not really choose a side, even if she appears to sympathise with Muslim scholar who is included in the “they”.

But when her accusation is looked at in conjunction with the arguments Sohail makes, strong binaries become apparent – on the one side, English (not British), and on the other side Islamic. Interestingly, in his second example of the war in Iraq, Sohail replaces his former use of the designation “English” with the term “white” raising the question whether being English simultaneously means being white and then through implication, whether being Muslim simultaneously means being coloured. The binaries that Sohail creates resonate with the racialist nature of the discrimination based on religious origin, in the name of prevention of terrorism. They, however, also reflect the ambivalent nature of his identity and along with that the nature of such terms that denote groups. He is clearly not white, maintains an “English cool”, protested against the Iraq war and does not share the views of others who are at meeting and who share the same religion and ethnic origin with him. He vacillates in a space between historically constituted static identities, being English, being of South Asian origin and being Muslim at the same time, borrowing and rejecting aspects of each at the same time.

At first glance it seems that Sohail leans towards one extreme of a wide spectrum of British Muslim identities, his Britishness as mentioned earlier being the subject position he most often occupies and articulates his identity in accordance with. He calls himself a “Brit” who is
“proud of his country” (Britz, Part 1). His reasons for joining the MI 5 are more than “a fat pay check” (Britz, Part 1). In his own words he states:

And … because I want to give something back. My parents came to this country. They had nothing. Britain took them in, fed them, housed them. I owe this country everything. If it wasn’t for Britain I would not exist. In my book that is a debt of honour and I intend to repay it (Britz, Part 1).

The idea that he owes something to this nation that provided his parents a home signalises how his own familial history plays a significant role in his identity. It also indicates another vital subject position that manifests itself in his identity, that of a member of a diaspora. Though identifying himself as British, he is aware of his genealogy in another continent. As mentioned earlier, these various subject positions he occupies show how differentiated his identity is. Though rarely articulated, his religious identity, his being Muslim, is also represented in the film more than once. At home for instance, in a sequence which is repeated in “Nasima’s story”, he is seen praying with his family. On another occasion, on the flight to Pakistan, when offered a choice between fish and pork, he chooses fish, pork being forbidden by Islam. During his initial recruitment process at MI 5 Sohail has to defend his loyalty to Britain. He wonders whether the test surveillance exercise involving stealing a tooth brush from a Muslim home, is him getting “special treatment” (Britz, Part 1). And when the racist police officers stop and arrest him and his friends in Bradford, first on the pretext of drunk driving and then under the Anti Terrorism Act, his fury is difficult to contain.

It is only on rare occasions that Sohail literally acknowledges he is a Muslim. One such instance is when he and his colleague Tess are in bed together and he says to her, that now she has had her “trophy Muslim” (Britz, Part 1). And Tess replies that he has now had his “trophy blond” (Britz, Part 1). Here, it isn’t just two groups of people, both of which are associated with certain prejudices and stereotypes that are being contrasted with each other. The use of the word “trophy” before the words Muslim and blond could be interpreted as a winnable and most of all collectable, single representative of these groups. Certainly neither Tess nor Sohail identify themselves solely as, “blond” or “Muslim” and with the notions that are associated with these groups. It is irony that underlies this conversation – irony with regard to construction of stable, fixed group identities like blond haired women or Muslims and associated prejudices and stereotypes. He is Muslim but Muslims are as much a heterogeneous group as blonds are.
The heterogeneity of British Muslims is emphasized in Sohail’s part of the narrative, through the inclusion of other British Muslim characters. Apart from Sohail’s sister Nasima, there are Shaz, and Imran who have different perspectives on the situation. One of the most remarkable British Muslim characters, who provides a contrast to Sohail, plays a minor role. She is one of the many people of South Asian origin, recruited by MI 5, and listens in on phone taps. In a conversation with Sohail who asks her if she is looking forward to going home after a long night of work, she replies: “This is Yorkshire. Home is Lahore” (Britz, Part 1). This single comment reveals not just the multifaceted nature of her identity, living in Yorkshire, working for British intelligence services, listening in on conversations of other British Muslims, and at the same time considering not Yorkshire but Lahore her home town, it also explicitly shows a differentiated nature of affiliations that individuals use to construct identities in groups. She might share her ethnic origin, religion, language and her professional identity with Sohail, but her notion of home is entirely different from his.

While both Sohail and his MI 5 colleague are represented as having hybrid, multifaceted identities allowing the conclusion that group identities are indeed heterogeneous and differentiated and ambivalent, the series also explores the processes of Othering which goes hand in hand with representation of identities as fixed and static, and how they contribute to an overshadowing of this ambivalence. At a meeting at the MI 5 office, a presentation is made to explain who the actual enemy is. To start with, the presenter is clearly marked through his Scottish accent, which emphasizes the idea of Britain as a nation rather than the individual countries and associated identities that comprise it. His definition of the “British suicide bomber” is as follows:

He is a second generation Pakistani, almost certainly. He is educated, possibly highly educated. Born here, reared here, I-Pod owning, Man United supporting, in many ways, culturally indistinguishable from you and me. He has experienced racism in his youth. Now he is a man. He’s frustrated. The jobs for which he is training and abilities that clearly equip him remain out of reach. He’s confused about his identity. Neither at home in the land of his fathers nor properly accepted as British here. He is tempted by the material wealth and comfort that the West has to offer, but raked with guilt because of that temptation. Just continuing to live here feels like betrayal. A betrayal compounded by the war he watches us conducting against his brothers all over the Islamic world. He feels powerless, angry, impotent. Above all he is seeking a community of the faithful, a band of brothers, which represent purity, integrity and a return to honour, seeking a cause which will allow him to
recover his dignity and escape the dreary reality of his everyday life. And now, he thinks, he’s found that cause – Jihad. Study him. This is your enemy (Britz, Part 1).

This long definition of the British suicide bomber is juxtaposed with a sequence of pictures on background screens visualising the claims and statements the presenter makes. Starting with a short sequence of British South Asians to an extreme right wing march when he speaks of racism, to a large group of Muslims praying when he mentions “community of the faithful” and “band of brothers” the projection ends in the close up shot of a face of an individual of South Asian origin focusing intently on the aspect of racial markers when he asks his audience to “study” their “enemy”. The highly dramatic filmic representation of this long monologue, that points out various aspects of the identity of “the British suicide bomber” in the beginning is narrowed down or reduced in the end to a single individual face. Whereas in the beginning the sequence reflects the notion of identity as a composed of an array of aspects (“educated”, “I Pod owning”, “Man United supporting”) instead of being concentrated on one single factor, it is in the end a definition, an answer to the question “Who is the British suicide bomber?” (Britz, Part 1; my emphasis). This aspect of defining, explaining in exact terms, compounded with putting a face to this “enemy” on the screen in the background to make the definition more precise, negates the effect of multiple facets (subject positions), which is explored earlier. Further, the choice of person presenting, speaking in a pronounced Scottish accent (underlining the not-just-English-but-British aspect) constructs a strong sense of unified national identity, which might be heterogeneous in itself, but which is then contrasted with the reductively represented identity denoted by the word “enemy” (Britz, Part 1). The process produces binaries and eclipses the ambivalent nature of identities. Taking it a step further, it could however be argued that the striking use of the self-reflexive attribute – the unquestionable influence of film footage to produce these binaries within the narrative in the first place – has an ironic function. It represents the power of the media in constructing static and fixed identities.

The second part of the series, Nasima’s story, starts with a repeat of the sequence where Sohail is asked to identify Nasima’s dead body in Pakistan, immediately followed by a recap of events leading to the sequence where Sohail tries to stop Nasima from pressing the trigger to the bomb she has strapped around herself. It portrays Nasima’s version of events and her development in the wake of these. After the recap from part one, Nasima, is introduced here as a
medical student at class with her best friend Sabia, in a very similar way as Sohail is introduced at his university among his friends in part one. Not just the fact that they are brother and sister, and have shared similar experiences growing up together in the same family, the progression of events in both parts starting with their introduction in similar settings (university and among friends) work to sharpen the contrast in their identities. From the very onset, Nasima is shown as politically active, writing letters to George Bush about the prisoners detained without trial at Guantanamo, organising demonstrations against the Iraq War and trying to mobilise other Muslims to join such protests. In contrast to Sohail’s character, whose articulation of identity revolves around being British or not, as the examples above elaborate, Nasima’s story thematises the aspect of religion. Soon into this part of the drama, she invites Jude, her Black British boyfriend to go with her to the Mosque, to which Jude answers “I am not Muslim, Naz” (Britz, Part 2). However, the conversation they have right before her invitation, where she blames her cousin Rashid, who is always busy with “god’s work” (Britz, Part 2) for the death of his mother and her aunt also points to heterogeneous religious identities that British Muslims have. The scorn with which she throws the flyer of his religious classes is hardly mistakable. Familial and religious affiliations are broken here, as Nasima and Rashid’s identities do not overlap in these aspects. At the mosque, Nasima and Sabia are shown speaking to other British Muslims trying to convince them to join the protests against “demonization of Islam”, “detention without trial at Guantanamo” (Britz, Part 2) and the governments in the U.S. and the U.K. that are spearheading it. On being told off by an older British Muslim for distributing flyers in front of the mosque, Nasima reacts, saying “This is exactly the place we should be talking about it” (Britz, Part 2). Fighting against Islamophobia, Nasima shows a sense of solidarity with victims of injustice. In wearing the headscarf while at the mosque she also articulates her own religious identity, which is different from the identities of those she argues with, who condemn her actions. When the older man physically pushes Nasima to the side, Sabia reacts: “How dare you lay your hands on a young woman? You should be ashamed of yourselves. Haven’t you read your Koran?” (Britz, Part 2) By citing the Koran and Islam in conjunction with gender, Sabia provides a counter perspective to what Sohail says in his story during his argument with Shaz about how the physical separation of sexes at a religious meeting was below “any self respecting woman” (Britz, Part 1). The hegemonic belief of Islam as a manifestation of patriarchy, where women are
forced into the subjugation that Sohail implies, is countered with Sabia’s citing the religious book and implying that this forced subjugation here in its physical form (violently pushing) is something that the Koran does not permit.

Aspects of intra-cultural heterogeneity and ambivalent identities among British Muslims is emphasized once again when this sequence is compared to another described earlier, where Nasima throws away the flyer that Rashid hands her about his religion classes. Within the common theme of Islam, the method used by both entailing distribution of flyers in an attempt to persuade others to also believe what one believes, are the same, yet their ends, i.e., the causes they represent are hugely different. The ironic juxtaposition of similar means to different ends creates ambivalence (the play between similarity and difference), highlighting heterogeneity once again. In spite of some shared attributes, including being Muslims and belonging to the same extended family, the identities of both Nasima and Rashid are not congruent.

Yet, there is a turn in Nasima, after she witnesses the victimisation of innocent British Muslims that the Laws on Terror permit, the uselessness of political activism as a means of countering these laws and the resulting helplessness. The control order which denies Sabia the right to see Nasima and others, attempts to segregate, break affiliations and friendship that the two have formed on the basis of shared aspects of identity. This forced break and the complete vulnerability that it leads to, result in Sabia’s taking her own life, and in turn Nasima looking for other affiliations. Imran, Sabia’s brother, who according to Nasima formerly “[gave her] the creeps” (Britz, Part 2) suddenly becomes a point of possible affiliation for her. Rashid’s flyers become acceptable. And Jude, her lover, for whom she has gone against her family’s wishes, becomes less acceptable because he is “not a Muslim” (Britz, Part 2). This change reveals crucial aspects of how individual subject positions change with experiences, and how affiliations based on overlapping subject positions also change in accordance. Notions of identity that view it as static, unchanging and therefore fixed, which have been used in processes of discrimination are questioned. The argument of experience of discrimination and vulnerability is often cited as a cause for extremism and might be argued by some to have taken on a cliché character in contemporary discourses on Islam. However, the development in Nasima’s character carries the subtext of how identities evolve, through changing affiliations, which could be applied in
different situations to counter fixed and stable notions of identities which are also based on clichés themselves.

Apart from religion, another facet of identity that plays an important role particularly in Nasima’s story is gender. The plot revolves around female suicide bombers, who, as Sohail puts it in his story, can go unnoticed as people expect men to undertake such action. The film juxtaposes normative gender roles in many forms of patriarchy with the unexpected, the difference creating ambivalence. One of the most powerful representations of this juxtaposition is at the training camp when Nasima and Aisha are asked to undress and try out the different strap on bombs that have been developed. The almost naked feminine figures of Nasima and Aisha could be understood as depicting fragility and vulnerability, and the strap on bomb the sign of power destruction. The bomb that gives Nasima the disguise of a pregnant woman carries further meaning. The role of women as mothers, as creators of new life, is juxtaposed with the function of the bomb which is killing life and ultimate destruction. The juxtapositions do not just add to dramatic effect, but also work to question traditional notions of women’s role in a discourse dominated by patriarchy.

Both parts of the series also look at gender roles within the context of Islam, showing diverse perspectives in this regard, not just through the use of various characters both minor and major, but also differentiated views of single individuals. So, on the one hand one sees conservative patriarchs like Nasima’s father, who packs her off with her mother to Pakistan to find her a husband as soon as she tells him about Jude, and the older British Muslims at the mosque who berate Nasima for distributing flyers in the mosque premises in spite of being a woman, and who would not consider having a woman member on their committee. On the other hand, there is Sohail who considers the headscarf a patriarchal imposition on women, a means of subjugation as the conversation with Shaz, cited earlier, shows. The women in the movie also represent a variety of views. Sabia, for all her political activism and defence of Nasima at the mosque, fears nobody will marry her and her parents will disown her, since she believes she is not a virgin anymore (as she bled during the cavity search when in prison). Traumatic as the search is for her, her reasons for fear stem from the inability to live up to patriarchal expectations of women with regard to sexuality. Nasima herself does not stand up to her father about Jude, her lover. Right in the beginning in “Sohail’s story”, before her character undergoes the major
change, she tells Sohail about the relationship, but she also says “dad will never find out” (*Britz*, Part 1). She, however, does also complain at a religious meeting she attends later that the thing that bothers her most about Islam is the way women are treated in it. Though expressing her problems with Islam at this public meeting, in the private sphere she still fears the reaction of her father, if he knew about Jude, at one point saying, “My father would literally kill me if he found out I was sleeping with anyone, let alone a non Muslim” (*Britz*, Part 2). Both in Nasima’s and Sabia’s cases, a disparity can be noticed between the public and the private when it comes to the subject position they occupy determined by their gender. This disparity again reveals how their identities as women are differentiated and determined by the context they are located in at a given point of time, highlighting the changing, fluid nature of identities.

Focusing further on feminine identities, Nasima’s story also shows solidarity based on the shared subject position as women, apart from friendships, which is the key affiliation that drives the plot. In the sequence when Nasima is arrested during the protest she organises and is questioned by two white male police officers who threaten to feed her bacon and force her to drink lager if she does not cooperate, for a split second the film focuses on Nasima and the white woman police constable (WPC) present. The first shot reveals Nasima looking directly at the woman and the next frame shows the woman looking at Nasima and immediately bending her head. This sequence could be understood as a representation of empathy that the woman feels with Nasima, specifically emphasized through the fact that she tries to avoid direct eye contact. It reveals a form of empathy based on an understanding of the abusive nature of masculine power that is embodied in the police officers and their threats. The WPC breaks her affiliation with them, which is based on grounds of ethnicity and even profession, and instead affiliates with Nasima on grounds of their being women, a group identity that has historically been and continues to be subject to abuse from patriarchal systems of oppression.

At first glance, the drama series *Britz*, presented as a two part narrative with each part packaged as a separate DVD and showing two radically divergent perspectives and developments in a similar context, might appear to resemble construction of binaries, a technique employed in creation of identities as fixed and static, defined by stereotypes and located in hierarchical systems of power. However, it is the inclusion of various subject positions (religion, nationality, gender, individual and cultural history), the fluidity of affiliations that gives rise to
heterogeneity and even the differentiated context-determined response of a specific individual vis-à-vis a subject position, that successfully reveal ambivalence.

3.1.5.2. Multiple Facets: Gender, Sexuality and Religion in EastEnders (BBC, 2009-2010)  

Like in the previous text, Britz, religious identity plays an important role in the story arc revolving around the British Pakistani Masood family in BBC’s popular soap opera EastEnders. Whilst most of the renewed audio-visual media interest in Islam post-9/11 and particularly, post-7/7 has to do with topics of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, as well as the repercussions of these, like the ever-widening problem of Islamophobia and newer forms of institutional discrimination, there are some texts that explore religion from different angle. EastEnders incorporates this difference through its thematic focus in the representation of the Masood family, middle class members of the fictional Albert Square’s multicultural community. When the family moves to Albert Square, it consists of Masood (Nitin Ganatra) and Zainab (Nina Wadia), their two sons, Syed (Marc Elliot) and Tamwar (Himesh Patel), and a daughter Shabnam, who is currently absent in the narrative, but can in all likelihood return. They share a business with their neighbours, the Beales, and it is through this connection that Syed, the elder son, meets Jane Beale’s brother Christian Clarke (John Partridge) and starts a relationship with him. As Syed is not willing to reveal this to his family, he and Christian split and Christian leaves. He, however, reappears in what some might call typical soap opera fashion, on the eve of Syed’s wedding to Amira (Priya Kalidas). The story continues with Syed oscillating between his wife and his lover, trying to appease his family as well as live out his sexual identity.

The homosexual South Asian Muslim male may not be an entirely original idea in the history of representations of British-South Asian relationships. From Foster’s arguably homoerotic relationship between Dr. Aziz and Mr. Fielding in A Passage to India (1936), first published in 1924, to Hanif Kureshi’s portrayal of the complex friendship and love between Omar and Johnny in My Beautiful Launderette (1985), diverse renderings of homoerotic, interracial love have recurred, to different socio-political ends, in many genres of British fiction, both literary as well as audio-visual. It is in this context that the relationship between Syed and

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75 All quotes from EastEnders (EE) are self-transcribed.
76 More recently, the film East Is East also has a sub-plot with this theme. Here the eldest son Nazir, being homosexual, is disowned by the conservative patriarchal Muslim father while the white British mother is supportive,
Christian from *EastEnders* seems to be unique, particularly in the portrayal of the responses it evokes from the other residents of Albert Square, as well as the British Muslim community depicted. The following analysis focuses on the representation of British Muslim characters with regard to two key facets of identity – gender and sexuality – in order to highlight the interplay of varying subject positions of individuals and the resulting ambivalence.

One of the most unique characteristics of soap opera that differentiates it from other genres of television drama is that the plot is driven by unresolved conflicts. This applies to the story arc of Syed’s sexuality in *EastEnders*, which spans over a year and does not reach a conclusion in the time period considered here for analysis. When Syed meets Christian, he has been together with his girlfriend Amira for some time; however, he finds himself attracted to this confident and proud gay man. They begin an affair, which comes to a temporary halt because of Syed’s reluctance to openly admit his sexuality. After a tiff over this, Christian leaves the country. Syed’s struggle with coming to terms with his sexuality, his inner conflict, stems as portrayed in the soap opera from multiple reasons. Representing a mainstream interpretation of Islam as forbidding homosexuality, the series depicts Syed’s struggle to reconcile his faith and his sexuality. He is a practising Muslim and is portrayed as not fully comprehending his attraction to another man. Further, having previously experienced alienation from his family, he fears the possibility of it happening again if he reveals the truth, a fear that is not religion-specific. Thirdly, his affection for Amira seems genuine, and, as the story makes it clear, his relationship with her is of his own choice and has not stemmed from cultural or parental pressure. In fact, when Christian does leave, Syed seems partially relieved and devotes himself with enthusiasm to his upcoming wedding.

The representation of Syed’s narrative concentrates on all of these factors, without letting one dominate the others. Religion, therefore, might be a part of the conflict but not its entirety. By maintaining this ambivalence, the series does not let religion overpower the representation of

 unlike the mother in *EastEnders* who cannot accept her son’s sexual orientation, while the father does not seem to have a problem. In British television, Channel 4’s popular drama *Shameless* (2004-present) and the digital channel E4’s *Skins* (2007-present) also feature queer Muslim men. Similar to Syed’s case in *EastEnders*, in both the series the incompatibility between religion and sexuality is the focus, laying emphasis on a conservative mainstream interpretation of Islam as being against homosexuality. This could be viewed as a controversial trend as the all the plots use a mainstream conservative interpretation of the religion as the aspect of conflict, further consolidating the belief that Islam is a monolithic, homophobic religion for many. This case reflects that representation has the power to determine the discourse.
this British Muslim character and his conflict with his sexual identity. On the eve of his wedding, when Christian returns and confronts Syed with his feelings after they kiss, Syed does not deny his love for him, but says he loves his family more. On the day of the wedding, Syed goes to Christian and once again defends his decision.

**Christian:** Didn’t sleep a wink last night. Turning everything over in my mind. Should I tell Amira, your family here on the square before the ceremony.

**Syed:** Tell them, what exactly?

**Christian:** That you are gay.

**Syed:** Isn’t that for me to decide.

**Christian:** I think the evidence is pretty compelling, don’t you?

**Syed:** Are you trying to blackmail me into telling them myself?

**Christian:** No. No, of course not.

**Syed:** What exactly do you want me to do?

**Christian:** I want you to be true to yourself.

**Syed:** True to myself! You make it sound as if being attracted to a man is the only part of me that matters. Yes I am gay. There I’ve said it. But I am also a son, a brother, a friend, a Muslim” (*EE*, BBC One, 01.01.2010; my emphasis).

Syed’s statement here in response to Christian’s accusation of not being true to himself highlights the multiple discursive points of attachment that subjects (subject positions) use to define their identity, described by Stuart Hall, which vary according to context (WNI, 1996: 5-6). Syed’s decision to perform a certain facet of his identity over others is his individual choice, as he clearly states, a choice that changes a number of times as the narrative proceeds. Religion once again is only one part of the reason for his choice.

On the day of his marriage, Syed’s mother, Zainab, finds out the truth and confronts first Christian and then Syed. She initially denies the possibility of her son being homosexual calling Christian “promiscuous and predatory” who is out to seduce a “pretty Pakistani boy” (*EE*, BBC One, 01.01.2010). Her remarks here do not just echo highly negative stereotypical prejudices against homosexual males, but also hint at a tradition of representation of inter-racial homosexual relationships. Using the word “pretty” to describe Syed, an uncommon usage to describe a male person, she reverts to older clichés of the effeminate coloured man present in the discourse. Her use of the word “boy” in this points towards the colonial representational practice of “infantilization”, that provides the cover of the taboo desire for the Colonised (Hall, 1997:262). Her statement could be understood carry a subtext that reflects not just on the paradoxical nature of the stereotype of the colonised Other (as a cover up for desire) but the
resulting asymmetrical power relationship that has governed both the colonial and the post-decolonisation race relations discourse between South Asians and white Britons. The disgust that she feels seems to originate as much from her prejudices against homosexuality as from the hierarchical relationship she interprets it to be. She further accuses Christian of pursuing her son because he probably hasn’t “had a Pakistani before” (*EE*, BBC One, 01.01.2010).

When Syed finally comes out to his mother, she threatens to disown him and tells him that if he chooses his love for Christian he would have to live outside the “love of God” (*EE*, BBC One, 01.01.2010). Here her line of reasoning, when she confronts her son, brings her interpretation of the Islamic religion as being against homosexuality back into the narrative. It could be argued that she may lose credibility in the eyes of the audience when her stance on her son’s sexuality is set against her own personal history which has entailed going against conservative strands of religious belief. In fact, throughout the series she has been represented as quite the liberal Pakistani Muslim woman, who divorced her first husband in order to marry Masood, whom she fell in love with. She also looks down upon Masood’s sister-in-law who is depicted as a traditionally stereotypical Muslim woman, who does not or may not express her opinion. Furthermore, her changing arguments and what might seem like contradictory stances might be interpreted as the complex facets of her identity, which change from context to context. When in confrontation with a white homosexual male, she resorts to extremely prejudiced stereotypes as well as expressing her contempt for set hierarchical structures that have governed race relations. In contrast, with her son, she argues with religion representing a conservative interpretation. While others around her might experience her as an emancipated, entrepreneurial Muslim woman for whom climbing the social ladder is of utmost importance, her family sees her in a different light, as a matriarch who often throws religion into an argument to defend her standpoint. Similar to Syed’s constantly changing context determined identity, Zainab also lets the context decide the role she performs.

In the course of events as they become clearer, after Syed and Amira split up and Syed comes out openly about his sexuality, both Tamwar and Masood, though they care deeply for Zainab, find her treatment of Syed increasingly unacceptable, which leads to a rift in the family with Masood leaving. Zainab does not waver from her position, and the situation reaches a peak when Syed, banished by mother and friends, attempts to commit suicide, but is rescued and taken
to the hospital. The sequence of events that follow, where Zainab wishes her son dead rather than gay, referring to his sexuality as a disease which cannot be cured, is highly provocative. The scene represents two different sides of Zainab’s character, that of a loving mother, as she strokes her son’s cheek and calls out to him lovingly, and her extreme, cruel radicalism when it comes to accepting his sexuality. The juxtaposition of these disparate emotions and beliefs may be perceived as the conflicting facets of her identity that cannot be aligned together to form a conclusively fixed whole.

Whereas the representation of Zainab’s lack of coherence may be understood as irrationality, Masood’s calm, collected and decisive attitude is quite the opposite. Traditional gender stereotypes are reiterated, yet questioned again, especially in the context of representations of Muslims, where the male character is the conservative patriarch in hegemonic notions of the religion, and the woman meek and docile and very often silenced. There is an ambivalence thus created with regard to gender roles as determined by religion and culture in the representation of this couple. They do not adhere to any simplistic norm and do not allow conclusive generalisations.

In addition to the individual characters’ differing and sometimes inconsistent reactions to developments in the plot, like those of Zainab and Syed, which establish identity as a complex, multifaceted and context dependent articulation of subjectivity, the serialised nature of the genre with long unresolved conflicts and the intersection of various story arcs creates ample opportunity for the representation of heterogeneity of perspectives and prevents the depiction of simplistic essentialised cultural identities. In the case of British Muslim identities, a diversity of responses is voiced in the narrative with regard to Syed’s sexuality. Apart from the differing stances that his family members take, secondary characters with a broad spectrum of perspectives on the issue are introduced through the twists and turns of the story arc. Whereas some members of the community shun the Masood family, others are more accepting. After an incident where Syed is insulted by a family friend, Nadeem, in the mosque, because of his sexuality, the local Imam visits the Masood family and speaks with the parents.

**Imam:** Syed ran out of the mosque. He was very upset. I spoke to Nadeem afterwards and he admitted. He admitted what he had said. He had no right.

**Masood:** Hmmm. What about you? What are you going to do?

**Imam:** As long as Syed needs the mosque, the doors will remain open to him.

**Masood:** Thank you (*EE*, BBC One, 13.05.2010).
Moreover, these reactions of either acceptance or rejection are not just restricted to voices from within the British Muslim community. The other non-Muslim residents of Albert Square also express their myriad opinions. For instance, the one of the characters introduced in the plot is a Catholic priest trying to cure Syed’s “disease” (*EE*, BBC One, 13.05.2010), revealing the homophobic stance of other religions. By portraying this wide range of perspectives from within as well as outside the community, *EastEnders*, transcends the dialogic and enters the realm of the heteroglossic, making a huge positive impact on the politics of representation. This is rendered possible mainly by virtue of the genre specific conventions of the soap opera.

Finally, in the context of current debates on British Islam, where the aspect of terror looms large, a different theme is at play here. It may not be a unique theme in the context of representations of British South Asian relationships and may still concentrate on cultural and religious conservatism when dealing with sexuality, a point also brought up by Asghar Bohkari of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (Mahmood, 2009) in his response to Syed’s characterization; however, the choice of keeping this particular issue as the central focus of the serial could be seen as a constraint of the genre, where sex related intrigues are a recurrent theme.

In spite of thematic constraints, the opportunities to diversify perspectives provided by the genre creates a multifaceted representation of British Muslim identities, and, as Syed’s story continues to be told on *EastEnders*, these multiple facets become a part of the contemporary discourse on British Islam.

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77 The BBC news website quotes Asghar Bokhari’s (representative of Muslim Public Affairs Committee, UK) comments on the gay Muslim storyline in *EastEnders* as follows: “The Muslim community deserves a character that represents them to the wider public because Islamophobia is so great right now. There is a lack of understanding of Muslims already and I think *EastEnders* really lost an opportunity to present a normal friendly Muslim character to the British public” (as quoted in: Mahmood, 2009).
3.2. Filmic Representations of British Muslim Pakistani Identities Pre- and Post- 9/11.

Similar to the British television landscape, British films have also been a site for representation and construction of identities, among them British South Asian identities. As the previous chapter mentions, the last decade of the 20th century marks a turn in the history of representation of British South Asian identities in British film. As Malik notes, there has been a remarkable shift from a “cinema of duty” to a “cinema of freedom” (Malik, 1996:215). Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg identify a certain move towards the “mainstream”, starting in the 1990s and continuing into the new millennium with films like East is East (1999) and Bend It Like Beckham (2002). They understand the notion of mainstream not as “submitting to structures of cultural hegemony or simply adapting to a British majority culture whose participants are still largely white” (Korte and Sternberg, 2004: 8; italics in original). For them mainstream “means to actively participate and change a predominant cultural stream. East Is East and Bend It Like Beckham epitomise this notion by centring their plots around British South Asian identities and at the same time crossing the genre of “special-interest films” to win mass audiences in and outside Britain” (Korte and Sternberg, 2004: 9). Both films explore hybrid and multifaceted diasporic identities without being overtly politically charged, using the aspect of comedy which undoubtedly explains partly their mass appeal. In fact, this development can be identified quite remarkably in the trajectory manifested in the works of the iconic British South Asian film director Gurinder Chadha. Her first film, Bhaji On The Beach (1994), dealt with feminine British South Asian identities, exposing the hegemonic gender and ethnic structures that affected identities of women of different age groups. The film combined comic and tragic elements to make a strong statement on gender and ethnicity as facets of identity. Her next big hit was Bend It Like Beckham (2002), concentrating still on a British South Asian family and exploiting the popular theme of inter-generational conflict, however done so with the use of much more comedy and a more subtle statement on hybrid, diasporic identities. The film that followed Bend It Like Beckham, again winning an international audience, was Bride And Prejudice (2004). As the name suggests the film takes the basic plot of one of the most popular of Victorian Britain’s narratives, Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, using however not even a British South Asian family but rather an Indian family. Set in three countries, India, Britain and the U.S.A, with Mr. Darcy being an American, the film does not focus on hybridity of British
South Asians through its story. It is the juxtaposition of the iconic English narrative, with elements of Bollywood filmmaking thrown in, that makes its style hybrid. *Angus, Thongs And Perfect Snogging* (2008) was another literary adaptation based on two books by Louise Rennison—*Angus Thongs and Full-frontal Snogging* and *It’s OK I am Wearing Really Big Knickers*. The main protagonists of the film, which deals with teenage problems, are all white British with one minor character being British South Asian. Cultural difference and diasporic identity are not thematised in the film. Chadha recently returned to situating her films in the British South Asian diaspora with her latest comedy production, *It’s A Wonderful Afterlife* (2010), which, like *Bend It Like Beckham*, focuses on inter-generational conflict with arranged marriage being the central theme. Chadha’s filmography highlights the idea of mainstreaming as explained by Korte and Sternberg, as a “cross-over” (Malik: 1996:215) from niche market to win a larger audience. The lack of the overt political statements and subtle explorations of British South Asian identities, if present, that this development reflects could be understood to signal a certain shift in expectations from British South Asian filmmakers. They can freely choose projects, can venture into territories previously reserved exclusively for white British filmmakers, and still attain success. It also reflects that cultural difference is a given in multicultural Britain and does not need to be explicitly politicised in film productions, almost echoing a post-racial understanding of society.

The following section analyses three films that, however, do not fall into this category of “cross-over” (Malik, 1996: 215) or “mainstream” (Korte, Sternberg: 2004) films. All three films thematise and politicise British Pakistani Muslim identities, which in the wake of 9/11, has been a subject of much discussion. *My Son The Fanatic* though from the year 1997 and prior to 9/11, pre-empts the growth of radical fundamentalisation among young British Muslims, of which there have been discursive representations. *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) and *Yasmin* (2004) have both been made post-9/11 and can hence be situated in the context of the ongoing debate on Anti-Terror legislation, a form of institutional racism as discussed in chapter two. It is in this context that the following analyses looks at the representations of British Muslim Pakistani identities using concepts like ambivalence and heterogeneity of identities to evaluate the texts in the context of discourse of multicultural, multi-ethnic and multicultural Britain.

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78 The fundamentalism amongst young British Muslims has been a topic of discussion ever since the Rushdie Affair, but has gained significantly in focus post 9/11 (elaborated in more detail in chapter two).
3.2.1. Intra-cultural Ambivalence in *My Son The Fanatic* (1997)\(^7^9\)

The film *My Son The Fanatic*, like many other works by celebrated author and script writer Hanif Kureishi, questions the idea of fixed identities. Such fixed identities based on racial and ethnic hierarchies have been quite the norm in representations of South Asians and Britons in colonial as well as in the post-decolonisation race relations discourses.

Directed by Udyan Prakash the narrative tells the story of a Pakistani cab driver in a Northern English industrial town. Parvez (Om Puri), a first generation immigrant to Britain, is married to Minoo (Gopi Desai), with whom he has a son, Farid (Akbar Kurtha). The onset of the film shows Farid, Parvez and Minoo at the Fingerhut home celebrating Farid’s prospective engagement to Madeline Fingerhut. Soon, however, it is revealed that Farid has broken his engagement without the knowledge of his father, who has been insisting on this marriage. This action seems to be only a part of the dramatic change that Farid undergoes in the course of the film. From a music loving, squash playing, average student, Farid becomes increasingly religious, with the moral cleansing of the city being his only major goal. Parvez, finds this change inexplicable, since he does not show a strong affiliation to religion himself. Work is his first priority and making his family’s, and especially his son’s, life in Britain as comfortable as possible his goal. This conflict spans the entire film, with the result that Parvez is increasingly alienated from his family, and enters into a sexual relationship with his friend Bettina (Rachel Griffiths), one of the sex workers he drives around in his cab.

With regard to representation of Muslims of Pakistani origin in Britain, the film concentrates, as the plot suggests, on the members of both the first and the second generations of the British Pakistani diaspora.

Parvez, as a member of the first generation, is, contrary to possible expectations, a seemingly liberal character, not overtly inclined towards his cultural origins and religion\(^8^0\). In fact, in a conversation with Bettina, he reveals how religion has never held any interest for him.

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\(^7^9\) All quotes from the film *My Son The Fanatic* (*MSTF*) are self-transcribed.

\(^8^0\) Most audio-visual representations of first generation members of the British South Asian diaspora, including British Pakistanis highlight the cultural conservatism and contrast it with the liberal ideology of the second generation that is born and grown up in Britain, making for the plot that generally embodies inter-generational conflict. (*East Is East, Britz, Bend It Like Beckham, Ae Fond Kiss, Yasmin*). The contrast of the father figures in *My Son The Fanatic* and *East Is East* is particularly marked, as it is the same actor Om Puri, playing both the character of George in *East Is East* and Parvez in this film (Yekani, 2007: 82).
since his youth. He mentions how he used to fall asleep during Koran classes at school and would be punished as a result.

The thing is, my father used to send me for instruction to the Moulvi, the religious man. But the teacher had this bloody funny effect. Whenever he started to speak or read, I would fall dead asleep. Naturally, I also annoyed him by asking why my best friend, a Hindu, would go to kaffir hell, when he was such a good chap. His eyes would bulge fully out. He would clip my arms and legs with a cane until blood came (MSTF).

But, at the same time, he sometimes reflects fondly on the memory of Pakistan, his country of origin. When Bettina takes him to the ruins outside the city, he remembers, almost with a sense of nostalgia (signalised through the use of the word “home” in the following quote), almost similar ruins in Pakistan that he used to visit with a girl, later revealed to be Minoo. “It’s magnificent. There were places back home I used to go. With a girl, actually” (MSTF).

Never literally identifying himself as either English or Pakistani in the course of the film, Parvez seems to be quite comfortable not limiting himself to either identity and partaking of both simultaneously. The first time he drives the German Mr. Schitz (Stellan Skarsgard), around in his cab, he points out all the landmarks in the town, narrating anecdotes related to their history.

You see that chimney, sir? It’s so tall it can be seen from Inkley Moor. The man who built the mill toasted his future on top of that chimney with champagne. Actually he built it so tall so that the smoke will fly over the house of one of his rivals. This town was the centre of world’s textile industry. Even Ayatollah Khomeini wore a robe made in this city in a mill over there. Actually you won’t see it because it was demolished some years ago (MSTF).

A visit to Fizzy’s restaurant follows, and this time Parvez narrates how he and his friend, Fizzy (Harish Patel), arrived in England, and how his friend has made a success of himself, where as he has remained a cab driver. “This restaurant, sir, belongs to my friend Fizzy. There, that fattish one. We came together to this country. He had five pounds, which he borrowed from me. Look now, and look at me” (MSTF).

His personal choice of providing this small tour of the town to a foreign visitor on the way to the hotel, qualifies these landmarks as important to him individually. By showing Schitz the local landmarks and narrating entertaining anecdotes, he seems to be claiming a part of the local history for himself, integrating it in his individual identity and making himself a part of it. His mention of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian religious leader who passed a fatwa against British South Asian novelist Salman Rushdie, shows his knowledge of contemporary British
history. It is interesting to note that as a British Muslim the controversy around Rushdie’s book *The Satanic Verses* has made an impact on his identity, which he integrates in his narrative here. And yet the fact that one cannot see the mill in which the robe that Ayatollah Khomeini wore was manufactured, highlights the ambiguous nature of this impact.

On the other hand, in making Schitz meet Fizzy, his best friend, and telling him about their personal history of immigration, he demonstrates how this experience is an equally important part of his own identity. When he meets Schitz in what seems to be an abandoned factory, he once again reflects on Fizzy’s and his arrival in England, the jobs they had to start with, and the racism they faced. “Mr Schitz, here I had my first job in England. Fizzy and I, five years, double shifts, seven days a week. But they wouldn’t put me in their team. Cricket team. We were the best players. I could spin a little” (*MSTF*).  

The concept of arrival, not just the immigrant’s literal arrival in a foreign land, but also its metaphoric value – how ‘at home’ an immigrant feels in the new land – is also thematised in the film. What Stuart Hall calls “becoming” and not just “being” (2003: 112), reflecting the dynamicity in the evolution of identities, is reflected in the anecdotes of his life that Parvez narrates and reflects on often.

Further, Parvez seems to be at ease with his past and his present surroundings. He does not live in a bubble of isolation from the culture of his present abode, elevating and glorifying the past, as many representations of the first generation diasporic individuals depict, for example in *East Is East*. The sequence in the beginning of the film, where he is supposed to pick up Schitz, represents his ‘arrival’ symbolically. In this sequence, Parvez is shown first leaning against his cab and staring pensively at a landing plane before the scene cuts to a sign saying “Arrival” (*MSTF*) inside the airport and passengers coming out. It is in the next shot that Parvez is seen again, holding a board with Schitz’ name misspelt on it as “Mr. SHITs” (*MSTF*). He is not arriving himself, but is on the other side, picking up a ‘foreigner’, whose name he misspells because it is unfamiliar. The sequence could be read as a depiction of Parvez’s identity as belonging to Britain, being on the other side of the arrival gate. He has arrived metaphorically, he is British. His misspelling in an attempt to anglicise the unfamiliar foreign name lends to the

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81 The experience of not being allowed to play cricket in a team, is also cited in the film *Bend It Like Beckham*, where Mr. Bhamra, a first generation East African- South Asian immigrant, does not initially support his daughter’s ambitions to become a professional footballer because of his own experience of racial discrimination in the field of sports.
humaour of the scene. It could also be read as a parody on white British unease about South Asian names, a situation that one often encounters in other texts representing South Asians (Peter Sellers’ films *The Party* and *The Millionaires*). Through such instances of ironic mimicry of situations that have defined the relationship between white Britons and South Asians, the film narrative subverts former hierarchies of race, ethnicity and culture and represents the ambivalence that informs contemporary British South Asian identities.

Parvez, as the protagonist of the film seems to be the beacon of this ambivalence. His relationships with women exemplify his comfort in the liminal zone between cultures, and between the past and present. With his wife Minoo he shares the memory of Pakistan and the experience of immigration. With Bettina, his current lover, he shares his present experience of being on the road. Though at first glance it might appear that Parvez’s affection towards Bettina is greater than that for his wife, it becomes clear in the course of the film that this may not be true. As mentioned earlier, in the sequence where he goes to the ruins with Bettina for the first time, he lapses into nostalgia for a time and place which he shared with Minoo. He tells her about it when he returns home and mentions later in the film that he wants to take her there. He retaliates when she does not eat with the family because of the presence of the visiting Moulvi from Pakistan. But it is at the end of the film that his affection for her is most apparent, when he asks her whether she will come back from Pakistan eventually. Like his memory of the past, Minoo is an integral part of his life. In spite of starting an extra marital relationship with Bettina, whom he considers a friend because she understands his present feeling of alienation from his family, particularly from his son, he cannot and does not want to give up his relationship with his wife. And similarly he cannot give up Bettina when Minoo asks him to, as she defines his present, sharing his experiences on the road. It is not indecisiveness or naivety that inform his conduct as, for him, this conflict is not an either-or situation. It is ambivalence that characterises his attitude. If Minoo represents the past and, with it, Pakistan, and Bettina the present and Britain, Parvez, in his inbetweeness, is indeed very ambivalent in his affection for both.

The only time Parvez’s liberal outlook seems to falter is with regard to the change that his son Farid undergoes. Parvez, for whom religion is not of much importance, shows increasing intolerance towards Farid, for whom religion keeps becoming more significant. At first, shocked and incapable of fully understanding his son’s change in attitude, Parvez starts trying to convince
him otherwise. Although he does reluctantly allow the visiting Moulvi to stay in his house, his deepening alienation from his son begins to show. This conflict reaches its peak when he discovers Farid in the mob that attacks the brothel where Bettina lives. He drags Farid back home and beats him. His radical violence in this sequence tends to undermine his ambivalent attitude with regard to other aspects of his life. But it is at this very instant that Farid asks: “Who’s the Fanatic, now?” (MSTF) Through this question the accusation that the film’s title seems to be making is reversed. With regard to religion, it leads to the decoupling of the word, ‘fanaticism’, and the concept, ‘religion’, as might be understood by the audience from the title and the change in Farid’s personality; it thus highlights the literal meaning of the word ‘fanatic’. Through this transfer of contexts, the film narrative could be understood as emphasizing the ambivalent meaning of the word ‘fanatic’ which may have come to imply, more often than not, religious fanaticism in the post-9/11 discourse. What further supports this line of interpretation is the fact that it is the almost anti-religious Parvez who uses violence against his son.82

In addition to Parvez, Minoo could also be regarded as an ambivalent character. Though she sides with the son almost consistently throughout the film, she does share a laugh or two with her husband behind closed doors, especially when he makes fun of the Moulvi. Whether or not she actually believes in what her son propagates is never made completely clear. She plays her expected role in the presence of the Moulvi, however she has not shown any vehement displeasure earlier when Farid is supposed to be marrying Madeline Fingerhut. Parvez, in fact, observes here that she has written to her family in Pakistan announcing the upcoming wedding. Though allusions to her knowledge of Parvez’s affair are made throughout the film, it is only in the end that she decides to leave him and return to Pakistan. She feels betrayed not only because her husband has cheated on her, but because he has done so with a woman of “low class” (MSTF). In this hierarchy that she establishes, class trumps race. Contrary to stereotypical representations of South Asian Muslim women, Minoo has agency.83 She does not take a

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82 The visual depiction of Parvez’s violent attack on Farid is also very similar to George’s violent attack on Maneer in East Is East, owing partly due to Om Puri playing both characters.

83 Here again a contrast can be drawn between the representation of Minoo’s character and the (non) representation of George’s first wife in East Is East. In East Is East George’s first wife is only represented through Ella’s and George’s jeering conversations, and is marked by her absence and hence cannot speak for herself. She qualifies as what Gayatri Spivak describes as the subaltern, being oppressed because of her ethnicity, class and gender (Spivak, 1993: 66-111). On the other hand, Minoo does not just speak for herself, but destabilises the colonial racial hierarchies, by considering herself superior to Parvez’s mistress and referring to the white woman Bettina as belonging to the lower classes.
subordinate position because of prescribed gender roles or hegemonic ethnic hierarchies. She might cover her head in front of the Moulvi, but stands up against her husband. She cannot be put into any box as she defines her identity on her own terms in different discursive situations. She performs as a partner who shares an intimate laugh with her spouse, a mother who loves and protects her son, a woman who fulfils patriarchal expectations of a religious leader, and one who leaves her husband because she feels he has stopped loving her to return to those who continue to love her.

Farid, the only representative of the second generation British South Asian diaspora, challenges his father’s wishes and expectations and becomes, as the film’s title suggests, a ‘fanatic’, a religious fanatic. However, as the narrative emphasizes, he has not always been so religiously inclined, changing from a music loving, squash playing average boy to a person who shuns these amusements for a strictly religious life. The reasons for this change are alluded to in the film but are never stated with certainty. In a conversation with Bettina, Parvez concedes that it might have been wrong to force Farid into studying accountancy against his inclination. Or, as Farid himself mentions in his justification for breaking up with Madeline, it seems to be the racist attitude of Chief Inspector Fingerhut. Though the reasons remain ambiguous, his only solace in the face of the alienation he feels is the practice of religion, of which his father disapproves. He could be considered the least ambivalent of the characters as he seems to adopt what might be considered an extremist outlook on life.

It is Farid’s extremity, juxtaposed against the individually different characters of British South Asian diaspora, each reflecting relative degrees of ambivalence, that lends the film narrative its own meta-level of ambivalence. The myriad contexts and meanings that determine the characters’ identities on an individual level are in sharp contrast to the conception of the South Asian diaspora in Britain as a homogenous group with no internal differentiation, as earlier racialised representations have tended to show. It is here that Farid’s retort to his father “Who’s the fanatic, now?” derives a second, more subliminal meaning. According to Farid, Parvez’s liberal and ambivalent stance has reached proportions where it could be considered fanatic. Both qualify as fanatics in their own right and for each other, and this multiplicity of perspectives and identities seems to be the main thematic of the film.
The film emphasizes this plurality using a repetition of the tour of the town for a foreigner. This time however it is Farid who explains the local history to the visiting Moulvi on the way back from the airport.

That extremely tall chimney on the left perfectly symbolises the overblown egos of the British industrialists in the 19th century. It was built that high so that the smoke from it would blow over the house of one of his rivals. Actually, Ayatollah Khomeini wore a robe made here. (Farid turns around to face the Moulvi who is in the back seat of the car, with excitement.) The place it was manufactured used to be on the right. Unfortunately, it was demolished some years ago (MSTF; my emphasis).

The tour given by father and son outline the same landmarks of the city, and almost the same information is given to the foreigner. The perspectives differ. If Farid’s version is compared with the Parvez’s, cited earlier in the section, the difference lies in the perspectives both have on the city’s landmarks. Whereas Parvez highlights the past wealth of the town these landmarks have been associated with by mentioning how the owner of the chimney “toasted” its success with “champagne”, Farid looks at it as a symbol of oppression. In contrast to Parvez’s sneeringly detached use of “Even” in the sentence that talks of Ayatollah Khomeini’s robe, Farid’s excitement is signalled by his use of “Actually” (MSTF). The use of “[u]nfortunately” in the next sentence with regard to the absence of the tower also reflects a certain perspective that Farid does not share with Parvez (MSTF). Like Parvez, however, there is a certain ambiguity in Farid’s narrative too. He first criticizes the first chimney as a sign of industrialisation representing Western Capitalist oppression, but however regrets the demolishment of the tower, which was supposed to have produced the robe of the Iranian religious leader. These two sequences, when looked at in relation to each other highlight the similarity and dissimilarity in the perspectives that members in a family might have, and by extension, a specific group of people, going against any essentialised notion of cultural or religious identity.

It is in this light that one of the last sequences can be interpreted as a powerful visual representation of this ambivalence. Parvez and Farid move parallel to each other in this penultimate scene, Parvez in his cab, Farid walking on the pavement, while Parvez reassures his son that he is always going to be there for him. The parallel movement of the two could represent a fundamental similarity between the differing outlooks of the two characters, both moving in the same direction – towards fanaticism – but maintaining their differences. Both father and son are
fanatics – one a liberal and the other a religious one. They are very different yet quite similar. The representation of their identities are thereby rendered ambivalent.

The opening sequence of the film further supports this idea of ambivalence of identities in heterogeneity and the play between similarity and difference. It could be seen as contextualising the plot by setting the scene as Britain, a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The film begins with the camera panning over a lake in typically English countryside and then focuses on an English country manor. And then the frame shows a furling Union Jack on the right. And inside this house, two families, a white British and a South Asian British, are engaged in conversation about their children’s prospective wedding. The marriage itself can be seen as symbolic, possibly of a union of cultures and also of classes as the conversation reveals. The photographs at the end of the sequence could be interpreted as symbolic tangible carriers of a memory of this cultural mixing and the possible emergence of the new idea of Britishness and British identities as hybrid, heterogeneous and ambivalent. The song which accompanies the following sequence with the opening titles of the film, celebrates the shared inheritance of diversity – diversity of cultures, but also as the plot reveals intra-cultural diversity. Its lyrics highlight similarity despite difference and the ambivalent nature of British identities.

In this green and pleasant land, we have a treat you understand, in the mountains of the mind there is a spirit you will find. Just like an angel from above we turn to the little words of love. Ancient cross and Zion star. Eastern wings and praise to Jah. This is our land. This is your land. This is our inheritance (MSTF).

3.2.2. Representation of Inter-Cultural Ambivalence in Ae Fond Kiss (2004) 84

The film, Ae Fond Kiss, directed by Ken Loach and scripted by Paul Laverty, uses a familiar intergenerational conflict to construct its narrative. Tariq Khan and his family of Pakistani origin live in Glasgow, Scotland. Though Tariq and his wife, Sadia, are first generation immigrants to Britain, his three children, Casim (Atta Yakub), Rukhsana and Tahara were born and have grown up in Scotland. The narrative exploits the thematic of intergenerational conflict in diasporic communities, as many films depicting the South Asian diaspora in Britain do. It pits the first generation immigrants against their children who are born and have grown up in the country.

84 All quotes from Ae Fond Kiss (AFK) are self-transcribed.
their parents have moved to, having if not none, then a very feeble connection with the country of origin of their parents.

From the very onset of the film the inter-generational contrast is highlighted. Immediately after the opening credits, the viewer sees Tariq Khan outside his corner shop shouting at dog walkers who allow their dogs to urinate on his sign boards. In a quick montage the scene cuts to Casim at his work place. He is a DJ in a club, playing (Bhangra) music for a group of multicultural and multiracial dancers. The parallel editing technique serves to emphasize the contrast and set this father and son in opposition to each other.

The plot of the story further intensifies this sense of contrast. Casim falls in love with a white Irish Catholic girl, Roisin, who works as a music teacher in his younger sister’s school and begins a relationship with her, of which his parents disapprove. His parents would rather have him marry his cousin Jasmine from Pakistan, who shares their cultural and ethnic identity. The conflict reaches its high point when Casim has to choose to either live life according to his parents’ wishes and marry Jasmine or with the woman he loves, and in the process break all bonds with his family. The ‘either-or’ situation represents a choice between two opposing ways of life and highlights the incompatibility of the wishes of parents and their son. This incompatibility sets up binary oppositions likes cultural conservatism on the one hand and cultural liberalism on the other, an opposition between the first generation South Asian diaspora and the second generation, between parents and children. However, when looked at closely, this contrast in choices or wishes of the characters, which stems from oppositions in identities, is not as clearly marked as it appears to be at first glance. Instead of stable and fixed identities, the film represents each of its British Pakistani Muslim characters as complex, hybrid and multifaceted.

Casim’s younger sister Tahara is the ideal manifestation of this identity. Early on in the film she sums up her own identity in a speech she makes at school. “I am a **Glaswegian, Pakistani, teenager** woman. **Woman of Muslim descent**, who supports the **Glasgow Rangers** in a Catholic school, [be]cause I am a dazzling mixture and I am proud of it” (AFK; my emphasis)\(^85\). Tahara lists the various subject positions that determine her identity making it multifaceted and dynamic– her city emphasizing her local identity, her country of origin, her age, 

\(^{85}\) The Catholic equivalent to the traditionally Protestant football club ‘Glasgow Rangers’ is ‘Celtic’.
her gender and religion. She is a hybrid, a “mixture” in her own words of all of these facets. Throughout the film she lives up to what she describes herself to be. She retaliates violently when her classmates call her “an uptight Paki” (AFK), insulting her ethnic and cultural identity. Her age and gender as a determinant of her identity is expressed when she and her friends go to the club late at night, something that her parents have forbidden. This sign of teenage rebellion could be considered cross-cultural. She is caught by Casim, who is shocked to see her dressed the way she is, who chides for her behaviour. Moreover, she is the only Khan family member who supports Casim’s relationship with Roisin, but stands up to Casim when she thinks he is in the wrong, even calling him a “hypocrite” (AFK). On the other hand she also stands up to her parents. She wants to study journalism at Edinburgh rather than medicine in Glasgow which is her parents’ wish, and throughout the film she tries to convince her parents of her choice. Her parent’s consent is important to her, and the lack of it upsets her. In a scene after the climax of the film she once again illustrates her hybrid character. She walks into the room where her parents are sitting at the table after the fight with Casim, both very upset. Taking her father’s hand in hers she says: “Dad, I know how you feel about me wanting to be a journalist. And about Edinburgh University. I just want you to know that I really want to go. And I am going to go. And I am going to keep speaking to Casim. I can’t not speak to him. He’s my brother” (AFK). Then she adds in Punjabi: “You’ve both given me a lot. I’ll give you a lot back too. Thanks, mum” (AFK). She acknowledges her parent’s disapproval of her choice in career, but informs them of her decision to pursue it despite this. While doing this she holds her father’s hand, a sign of her affection towards him, illustrating how emotions of love and affection can coexist with disagreement. Further she thanks them for all they have given her and says she will do the same for them. She does not just love them, but respects them and is grateful to them for all that they have done for her. For her, going against her parent’s wishes, by pursuing her own aims does not mean a complete break with them. In her understanding this is not an ‘either-or situation’ with two fixed, mutually exclusive ways of life going in opposing directions, much like a fork in a road. Rather it is a third path (much like Bhabha’s ‘third’ space. Rutherford, 1990: 207) that combines the differing elements of both. The switch from English to Punjabi adds to the hybrid dynamicity of the sequence. It doesn’t just reflect her own hybrid cultural background, speaking the native language of her parents, as well as Glaswegian English the language of the place she
was born and grew up in. It also emphasizes the hybrid nature of the way of life she has chosen. She states her decision of career in English, and her emotions of gratefulness, respect and affection towards her parents in Punjabi (Kiernan, 2008: 128).

Rukhsana, Casim’s elder sister, is, in comparison to Tahara, much less explicit when it comes to hybridity or its multiple facets. It is Tahara who describes her sister in the same speech at school where she talks of her own identity. “My sister considers herself as a Muslim first. And because she has a political streak, calls herself black” (AFK). Two facets of her identity are revealed which become more explicit later on in the film. She has willingly agreed to a traditional arranged marriage in keeping with her parent’s wishes and is excited about meeting her prospective husband. Her “political streak” that Tahara refers to earlier maybe be inferred from own statement. “It’s good to do some voluntary… voluntary work in the communities” (AFK). The community and her family are very significant contexts in which she articulates her identity. This becomes even more apparent in her conversation with Roisin.

Roisin, you must be wondering why I have asked to…well, I’ve come to see you, I suppose. You must think it’s very odd, but, basically I feel that I had to talk to you because of what’s going on just now with my family. Erm. Casim has left home and he is living with you. And as far as my family is concerned and my community is concerned, it’s brought a great deal of shame on all of us. You see we have this concept called ‘izzat’ which I guess is family honour, and that’s really, really important to people. And my parents, all their lives, have worked very, very hard to maintain that to keep that. And they’ve built up respect and trust in the community. And what Casim has done has basically taken that away (AFK).

Further she explains the implications of Roisin’s and Casim’s relationship on her own engagement which has been called off and asks Roisin to leave Casim. The conversation reveals how deep Rukhsana’s identity is grounded in her family and their standing in the community on the one hand. On the other hand, her motivation for coming to Roisin and pleading with her to leave Casim has a personal angle as well. Her own engagement to Amar, the man she has met through her parents, and whom she is “very fond” (AFK) of in her own words, has been called off because of Casim’s actions. This second reason reveals her own individualistic desire of being married to the man she loves, not just one who her parents have chosen for her. Her identity is more complex than it appears to be at first glance. In her conversation with Roisin, Rukhsana is not just a member of the community who disapproves of inter-racial, inter-cultural
relationship, or a member of the family that has been shamed, but also a individual whose own dreams and aspirations cannot be fulfilled because of the relationship her brother has begun.

With regard to Casim’s parents, especially in the case of Tariq Khan, the aspect of experience plays an important role. In addition to being a father and a husband, he is a first generation immigrant from Pakistan to Britain, who has had to struggle to establish himself, deal with racism and abuse in the process, an experience he shared with other immigrants from the subcontinent that influences his identity.

Casim describes this experience in an argument he has with Roisin.

Have you ever had a dog set on you, Roisin? Had a group of kids chasing after you making monkey noises? I don’t think so. You have any idea how many times he had to keep his mouth shut. The humiliation, the insults he’s been through? None whatsoever (AFK).

Another significant facet of his identity is explored through his personal experience, his personal history – his experience of the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Casim narrates his father’s story to Roisin, showing her old photographs.

Casim: My dad’s a twin.
Roisin: Is he? They are lovely. (looking at the photographs) Where were these taken?
Casim: India. Their 8th birthday. Two months before Partition, 1947. There were Muslims living in India. They had to go over to Pakistan. Sikhs and Hindus fled the other way. 15 million people on the march. Plus two. (referring to his father and his uncle). They said it was like a journey from hell. The whole fucking place exploded in hysteria. Muslims butchered Hindus. Hindus slaughtered Muslims. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people died. Halfway through, they were caught in an ambush outside a village. My dad’s brother was kidnapped. He was never, ever seen again. It’s marked my dad for life.

Roisin: What was his name?
Casim: Casim (AFK).

The Partition which divided India and Pakistan on the eve of independence of the subcontinent from British colonial rule is not just a part of cultural history for Tariq Khan and his family, as people of Pakistani origin. It is a part of Tariq Khan’s personal individual history and memory. The trauma of losing his twin to the brutality of the riots continues to plague him till the present day and he still has nightmares and wakes up crying. As Casim says, the experience has “marked [him] for life” (AFK). It has been etched into his identity, and not just his, but also his son’s. Casim has been named after his father’s twin. He carries photographs of the two with him. The traumatic experience becomes a part of family history and memory, tangible through the photographs, to be carried forth through generations.
Similarly it is the experience of racism in a foreign country that Tariq has faced as a first generation coloured immigrant has become an integral part of Casim’s identity. Casim’s own experience of seeing his father stabbed is closely entwined with his father’s experience of violent racism. In comparison with the experience of partition that, as elaborated earlier, is a part of Casim’s individual and cultural identity, he shares in his father’s experience of racism and discrimination more directly. His ethnicity is a strong part of his identity, a subject position which he shares with his family and others in the community, but not with the woman he loves, Roisin. In an argument with her he says: “You’re white. You don’t understand” (AFK). Religion has a similar role for him. He asks if Roisin would consider converting to Islam. Such moments could be understood as a process of Othering where Casim creates binaries on the grounds of ethnicity and religion, with him and his family on one side and Roisin, being white and Catholic, on the other. This also seems emphasized in the either-or choice, the dichotomy, between family and love that Casim seems to be faced with. As Hamid, Casim’s friend, puts it:

What you’re gonna screw up your whole family. […] You’ve got a family to think about. You’ve got your religion to think about. You’ve got that to think about. (Pointing towards the mosque). How’re you gonna walk in there? […] Give a fuck if you lose her (Roisin). Would you rather lose your family or would you rather lose this bird? (AFK).

Casim is, however, indecisive about whether he wants to break his relationship with Roisin or his family. He vacillates between the two, arguing with Roisin, going back to his family, and then coming back to her. This hither and thither from one to another, in between what for him seem to be binaries (as explained earlier) could be interpreted as an expression of the ‘not-stable’ nature of his identity. His identity is in constant flux, his decision changing often and his place actually for most of the narrative in between the binaries he creates. Very different from Tahara’s, his own sister’s third space, Casim has a different way of negotiating the binaries he creates. Furthermore it is almost impossible for him in his relationship with Roisin to give up his cultural identity. If language and food are signifiers of this, he speaks to her in Punjabi calling her lovingly “Duddo” (frog) (AFK) or making her Gulab Jamuns (a traditional sweet from the northern region of the Indian subcontinent). He tells her, as mentioned earlier, about his cultural history, about the Partition and his own father’s experience of the Partition.

The Khan family members are, in fact, different from one another. They have different identities contextualised by their individual experience, wishes and aspirations. They, however
share certain significant facets, family history, language, etc. They are heterogeneous individuals whose identities overlap when it comes to certain aspects and not when it comes to others. If family is looked at as the smallest social unit comprising individuals, then the ambivalence of the identities that the Khan family represents could be extrapolated to larger social groupings like communities. The film *Ae Fond Kiss* explores this ambivalence created through the internal diversity in British South Asian/Muslim diasporic identities. It criticizes essentialist notions of identities. Tahara summarizes this early on in the film, in her speech.

Imagine I lump Christians, George Bush, the Pope, Henrik Larsson and Willie, the Janny all into one person. You’d laugh. Why? ’Cause it’s dumb. But that’s exactly what the West does with Islam. As if one billion Muslims in 50 countries with hundreds of different languages and countless ethnic groups are all one and the same. Take my family. My sister considers herself as a Muslim first. And because she has a political streak calls herself black. My dad has been in this country for over 40 years and is a 100% Pakistani. Or so he thinks. I reject the West’s definition of terrorism, which excludes hundreds of thousands of victims of state terror. I reject the West’s claim of moral high ground after two of its main Jesus lovers tore up the UN charter. But above all I reject the West’s simplification of a Muslim (AFK).

And then she goes on to describe her own identity as a Glaswegian, Pakistani, Woman and Teenager (quoted at length earlier in this section, AFK).

Apart from intra-cultural heterogeneity and resulting ambivalence in identities, *Ae Fond Kiss* explores ambivalence between different minority communities. Roisin is of Irish origin and Catholic. Like Casim she belongs to a religious, diasporic minority group in Britain. Her country of origin is also a former colony of Britain, and many Irish immigrants have also had to face prejudice and discrimination in postcolonial Britain. Though this aspect is not explicitly explored through Roisin’s characterisation, the film hints at it at one instance. While moving the grand piano to Roisin’s apartment, one of the helpers asks Roisin if she is Irish. When she says yes he responds in jest “Could you not have just stuck with a tin whistle or something?” (AFK) followed by everyone laughing. The stereotype of the Irish and the tin whistle is rendered even more harmless by the irony of the situation. Here is an Irishwoman who owns a grand piano.

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86 The relationship between two former colonised British minorities, Irish and South Asian is also thematised in *Bend It Like Beckham*. Here Jess’s coach, and love interest, Joe, is Irish. However, in contrast to the representation of this configuration of inter-racial relationship in *Ae Fond Kiss*, the prejudice faced by the Irish is voiced in *Bend It Like Beckham*, and a solidarity is built on basis of the shared experience of discrimination.
Also in comparison to the blatant racism that Casim and his family face in their daily lives, this comic use of a stereotype hardly stands out.

Furthermore, when on holiday in Spain, Casim and Roisin discuss religion. The conversation highlights the similarities between Catholicism and Islam, both Semitic religions.

**Roisin:** So what about angels?
**Casim:** We have angels
**Roisin:** Virgin birth?
**Casim:** Yep. We’ve got a special chapter on Mary.
**Roisin:** Really?
**Casim:** Nods
**Roisin:** Transubstantiation?
**Casim:** What’s that?
**Roisin:** It’s where the priest turns the bread and wine literally into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
**Casim:** Laugh
**Roisin:** What are you laughing at?
**Casim:** No
**Roisin:** So I suppose then, you believe that the Archangel Gabriel in a cave whispered the word of God word by word, into Mohammed’s ear?
**Casim:** Exactly. There is still so much I am proud of. Do you know what ‘Zakah’ means?
**Roisin:** Nods to say no
**Casim:** It’s when you give a percentage of your income to the poor. My dad still to this day gives exactly to the penny to asylum seekers. Kill a man kill all of humanity. We can be higher than angels and lower than dogs.
**Roisin:** Love thy neighbour as thyself.
**Casim:** None of us truly believe until we wish for our brothers and sisters what we wish for ourselves.
**Roisin:** To the prophet. (lifts her glass)
**Casim:** To Jesus. A lesser prophet but what the hell. (lifts his glass too)
**Roisin:** At least we both believe that life is one long miserable test and the Day of Judgement is fast approaching. So to paradise. (lifts her glass again)
**Casim:** Cheers
**Roisin:** Or to hell’s furnace.
**Casim:** Paradise (AFK).

The sequence of dialogue is interesting as it works out the similarities and the differences in their respective religions. Both believe in angels and virgin birth. In spite of small differences the similarities are profound, both Casim and Roisin drinking to each other’s religion’s in the end and to the shared beliefs in paradise and hell. Culturally and religiously Casim and Roisin seem to have major similarities. In fact even on the personal front, both experience disapproval from their respective religions. If Casim is faced with the fear of being shunned by his family and
community, then Roisin loses her job because she is living with a Muslim man. Much like Casim, she is faced with a choice too. But for her the choice is quite clear. Calling the priest a “bigot” (AFK), she shows no hesitation in her decision to continue with the relationship. Her mum would have wanted her to be happy is her answer, when Casim asks her what would her family have thought.

Herein lies the significant difference between both characters. It is the reason for most of their arguments. Roisin is characterised as an independent woman of Irish origin, who left her previous husband, and lives life irrespective of what her community thinks (if the priest and the other school teachers are the other representative of her (religious) community as the film shows). Interestingly, in contrast to Casim who shares his cultural identity with her, teaching her words in Punjabi, or cooking her traditional food telling her about his cultural history, Roisin does not bring in aspects of her Irishness into the conversation. Whereas Casim vacillates between family and love, Roisin remains stable in her commitment towards her relationship.

One of the possible ways of interpreting this difference between Casim and Roisin is as a representation of cultural liberalism vs. cultural conservatism. If this line of thought is followed and seen in conjunction with Casim’s comment cited earlier “You are white. You don’t understand” (AFK), then the difference in their skin colours could be understood as the sole signifier of this difference. Roisin does as she pleases in spite of opposition, whereas Casim cannot. In spite of the similarities between Casim’s and Roisin’s identities, it is difference that becomes the key factor. Being coloured implies a cultural conservatism that being white here doesn’t. The intercultural ambivalence in identities that could exist on the bases of similarities between Roisin and Casim gets lost with racial difference taking centre stage and rendering binaries and dichotomies similar to those used in the colonial discourse.

3.2.3. Gender and Agency in the Representation of British Pakistani Muslim Identities in Yasmin (2004)

The film, Yasmin, produced by Scottish Film and Channel 4 in collaboration with German production company EuroArts, could be considered a direct response to the situation of British Muslims of South Asian origin in the wake of the attacks on the twin towers in New York in

87 All quotes in from Yasmin are self-transcribed.
Directed by Kenneth Glennan and scripted by Simon Beaufoy, the narrative bases itself on extensive ethnographic research conducted in Lancashire and Yorkshire areas of Northern England (Sternberg, 2008: 80-81). Yasmin (Archie Panjabi) is a second generation British Pakistani woman who lives in a small town in Northern England. Her father Khalid (Renu Setna) and her brother Nasir (Syed Ahmed) live in the flat opposite her. Under pressure from her father she has been forced to marry a Pakistani man called Faysal (Shahid Ahmed) who is awaiting approval on his residency status from the immigration authorities. In addition to working at a full time job, Yasmin cooks and cleans for her family. It seems like she lives in two worlds, one of her family and community at home and one at work. Even the DVD cover describes the film “one woman two lives” (DVD cover Yasmin). This description provides an insight into her identity, which as a second generation member of a diasporic community is very complex.

Yasmin works in a different town than her home and she drives through the Dales to work every day. The journey itself signifies the distance between the two places, both in a physical and metaphorical way. Multiple sequences in the narrative show Yasmin on her way to work, or changing her clothes on the way to work, representing the differences between these two parts of her identity. She takes off her hijab and traditional clothes – Salwar Kameez – and puts on jeans and tops for work. For R. Ahmed, this repeated symbolic use of change of dress signifies the binary that the film starts to construct between the British Pakistani Muslim tightly knit community in the area that Yasmin lives and her almost exclusively White workplace (2009: 289). The fact that there is an added emphasis on her drive to work through the boundless countryside of Yorkshire in a car with an open top could be interpreted as symbolising the freedom that Yasmin experiences while driving to work. The car signifies freedom of mobility, and the fact that she has purchased the car with her own money further implies an economic freedom (Stroh: 2010, 237). At work she seems to be romantically interested in a colleague, John. When talking to him about the car, she distances herself from the other British Pakistani people. She says she did not want a “TP” or a “typical Paki” (Yasmin) car, using a common racist abuse for a British South Asian. At first glance this creation of the dichotomy between expectations of family and community on the one hand and the implicit freedom at the

88 Only in one of the sequences at Yasmin’s work place does one see a mixed-race man.
89 The aspect of the journey to work, which is repeatedly shown in these multiple sequences, could also be considered to symbolise a key aspect of diasporic identities, i.e. the journey that diasporic individuals take when they leave their country of origin and settle in a new country.
workplace for Yasmin reinforces the notion of hegemonic patriarchal gender roles enforced by Islam in the discourse. However this notion of liberalist vs. conservative outlooks of culture and religion is deconstructed very quickly, revealing that diasporic identities are complex, hybrid and heterogeneous. At home Yasmin is hardly the meek and docile woman, oppressed by the male members of her family. She does cook and clean for her family, but also expresses her opinion quite frankly. She chides her brother for not turning on the oven for instance. She tells her father that though she has complied with his wishes and married Faysal, she will divorce him as soon as he gets his leave of indefinite stay. And she shouts at and is violent towards Faysal on more than one occasion, something hardly consistent with discursive images of the subjugated Muslim women.

Closer inspection reveals how Yasmin also complies with certain expectations at the work place. When she goes out with colleagues she pretends to drink alcohol, swapping empty beer bottles for filled ones or draining out the glass when unobserved. At a celebration at work, when John offers her champagne, she first refuses. It is only when he tells her to stop being a Muslim that she agrees to have one. This again reveals Yasmin’s conscious effort at distancing herself from an essentialised image of a Muslim woman in the discourse. It exposes, in Ahmed’s words, “the constructedness” of the role she plays at work. It reveals “the pressures that operate to shape subjectivities, thereby to some extent destabilizing culturalist assumptions about Muslim women” (2009: 289). It is John who mentions Islam forbidding alcohol consumption showing how the ‘liberal’ culture that he seems to represent also exerts pressure to conform. Other comments from fellow workers even prior to the events of 9/11 also show the racialised nature of her work place, contextualising her incessant need to fit in or conform.

While Yasmin balances her life at work and her life at home, her brother, Nasir also seems to be playing with different roles. Sequences at the beginning of the film show him as the local muezzin and reading the Koran out to his father. At other instances the film shows him selling drugs to other youngsters. The film’s focus on the divergent aspects of his identity might not be as intense as that on Yasmin’s but dress again plays a role in the signification of religion. While at the mosque or reciting the Koran he adorns a skull cap over his everyday clothes of jeans and a sweatshirt. Nasir like Yasmin seems to be negotiating his identity, performing two roles that do not have much in common (Ahmed, 2009: 288). This fact is brought to the notice of
the audience by the repeated comments of their father, Khalid, about the “freedom” they enjoy “out there” (Yasmin).

Khalid himself seems to be “more emblematic of the ‘perceived ills’ of the community as the ageing patriarch who expects his daughter to attend to the family’s domestic needs and emotionally blackmails her to marry a cousin from Pakistan” (Ahmed, 2009: 288). This intergenerational conflict is very similar to that in Ae Fond Kiss and other films like East Is East as Khalid threatens to break all contact with Yasmin if she divorces Faysal. Khalid’s identity, as a first generation member of the diaspora is also contextualized in the face of the experiences he has suffered. Though not as vocally expressed as in Ae Fond Kiss, the first sequence of the film shows him trying to rub the NF graffiti off the mosque shutter, indicating the racism he must have had to face and continues to face in Britain. His electronics repair shop windows show further racist graffiti. Another facet that comes across, one that he shares with other filmic representations of his generation, is his connection to his country of origin. He listens quite like George, the protagonist of East Is East, to radio broadcasts of cricket matches between India and Pakistan and discusses this with his friend. He is building a house in Mirpur, the Kashmiri village he comes from and often ponders over its photographs. This connection to the homeland he shares with Faysal who has recently immigrated to Britain. Faysal often rings his relatives in Pakistan and receives parcels from there. He even goes to the extent of partially trying to recreate a imitation of his rural life back in Mirpur, by cooking outside on the open fire, or bringing a goat to the house and tying it in the yard, outside. The bond to the homeland is a key aspect in his identity.

The events of 9/11 provide the catalyst to the dramatic changes in Yasmin and her family’s lives. Each of the main characters views the media coverage of the events. Yasmin together with John at her work place, Khalid at his own shop with multiple screens, Nasir with his friend, and finally Faysal in a shop window, see the reports of the twin towers coming down. The montage of the various characters, each viewing the events, with the final shot showing a reflection of the twin towers going down on Faysal’s stunned face, serves to show the immense impact this event has in store for the characters, of which they themselves are not aware.

Yasmin does not realize the significance of the events immediately. She continues with her life oblivious to the changes the terrorist attack might have caused. When her colleagues put
a note on her locker saying “Yas loves Osama” *(Yasmin)*, she does not even know who Osama is, and when John enlightens her, she brushes the incident aside. For Silke Stroh “Glennaan’s non-Muslim characters seem far more preoccupied with Islamic terrorism than the Muslim protagonist, an incongruence which offers an ironic comment on the absurdity of Western paranoia and the general suspicion that Muslims are placed under” *(Stroh: 2010, 239)*. This is compounded by the fact that John expects a Muslim to come forward and apologise for the acts of terrorism. His expectation here further highlights the general liberal white perception that all Muslims are a homogeneous group. This line of thought is further explored in the film through the continued emphasis on surveillance. Shots of police vans now in the neighbourhood where Yasmin lives with her family juxtaposed with the sound of helicopters heighten the tension and go to show how an entire community is placed under suspicion merely because of their religion. It is not just John, an individual character who essentialises in his demand for an apology, but in fact the entire establishment with its institutions like law enforcement which works on the same principle. The film also explores a continuity in the racialised victimisation of minority communities, specifically the British Pakistani diaspora. Not just racist graffiti by other right wing groups like the NF that Yasmin’s father is confronted with, but much more the comments of Yasmin’s colleagues show the prevalence of racism even prior to 9/11. In one sequence, in fact the police ask her (she is wearing her hijab in the sequence) to pull over and check her papers, a sequence reminiscent of SWAMP’ 81, a stop and search police action cited and condemned as an example institutional racism. Though the focus on the victimization of the British Pakistani diaspora is much more intense after the events of 9/11 in the narrative, the continuity is maintained between the experiences.

The pivotal turn in the plot occurs when armed police enter both Yasmin and her father’s flats holding guns to their heads and questioning the whereabouts of Faysal, whom they suspect to be linked with terrorist groups. The police arrest Yasmin, Khalid, Nasir and John who is visiting Yasmin and interrogate them. In Stroh’s words the sequence, especially the fact that John is also arrested, “underlines the arbitrariness and needless violence of police actions” *(Stroh, 2010: 240)*. Faysal being arrested when he calls for police help thinking his wife’s flat has been burgled only serves to heighten the irony of the situation.
For Yasmin, the events go to show “that traditional structures – the regime of the elders as well as that of multicultural Britain – have failed her” (Sternberg, 2008: 86). In a last attempt to continue living her life the way it was, she goes to work only to be forced to take leave.

**Boss:** Perhaps you should take some time off.
**Yasmin:** There is nothing wrong with me.
**Boss:** Just let things calm down a bit.
**Yasmin:** What things? What have I done?
**Boss:** I notice you have lots of leave owed.
**Yasmin:** And what does taking a week off work make me look like. Oh where’s Yas? Oh, she’s off sick. Why? ‘Cause of twin towers, ain’t it? Cause of war in Afghanistan.
**Boss:** I wonder if you are not getting it a little bit out of proportion (*Yasmin*).

The irony lies in the fact that being asked to take leave under the circumstances is probably blowing it out of proportion. For Yasmin, it highlights how the white liberal gaze perceives her as a member of a homogeneous Muslim group, something that she has tried to dissociate herself from on previous occasions.

The continuous rejection of Yasmin’s identity as hybrid British Pakistani diasporic woman by the other characters leads her to reassert this in a new way, probably even in a more active way. She takes up wearing the hijab more regularly, as the rest of the narrative visualizes, displaying her religious identity. She does not give up her wish to get divorced from Faysal, but instead of doing this according to the British legal system she does this according to Sharia law. She in fact leads Faysal to say “I divorce you” (*Yasmin*) three times, normally a prerogative of the male and therefore symbolic patriarchal oppression. She has not yet and still does not submit to the patriarchal structures of oppression that hegemonic discourse associates with Islam. By making the separation a religious rather than a British legal one she also subverts the institutions of law enforcement and prevents Faysal’s deportation. Her act is one that emancipates her not just as a Muslim woman but also as a member of a racialised minority community (Sternberg, 2008: 86-87; Ahmed, 2009: 292).

Yasmin’s last conversation with John whom she (dressed in the traditional South Asian outfit of Salwar Kameez) meets on the street again shows how she reasserts her identity in the hegemonic discourse that surrounds it.

**John:** You alright?
**Yasmin:** Yeah, I’m alright. I’m good. How are you?
**John:** Well, you know, I mustn’t grumble, but I do.
Yasmin: I were getting a divorce, John.
John: You didn’t think to tell me?
Yasmin: Sorry
John: So, did you? Get the divorce?
Yasmin: Yeah, as it happens.
John: Oh right….Right well…I’m going to for a drink. Do you fancy coming?
Yasmin: No, er, I’m going off to the mosque. D’ you fancy coming?
John: You? Really?
Yasmin: Might be…
John: I don’t think so…
Yasmin: Well, I’ll see you then, yeah?
John: Probably not, love (Yasmin).

For Yasmin, the incessant need to comply with certain pressures has ceased to exist. Her renegotiated identity can without any compunction refuse to go for a drink, whereas earlier she would pretend to drink. Though, as Rehana Ahmed points out, the conversation still brings out binaries “pub vs. mosque” (2009: 292), it could also be argued that Yasmin subverts precisely this. Yasmin’s response allows space for other options in her ambiguous use of “might be” (Yasmin). The uncertainty that accompanies her open-ended phrase implies a likely possibility of seeing John again and transcends what the dichotomies “pub vs. mosque” might be extended to. For her wearing a ‘salwar kameez’ or going to the mosque does not foreclose all contact with John. For John however it does mean an end of his relationship with Yasmin. The narrative at this point completely deconstructs hegemonic perceptions and associations with White British and British Pakistani cultures, inverting stereotypes of liberalism vs. conservatism.

Like some other audio-visual narratives analysed in this chapter, the film Yasmin also shows intra-cultural heterogeneity. Like the female protagonist Yasmin, her brother Nasir also renegotiates his identity in the wake of the police action. His experience of this violence drives him to become a potential terrorist. Facing rejection, like Yasmin, especially from his father, who represents in Sternberg’s words “traditional (pre-9/11) tolerant Britain” (Sternberg, 2008: 92)90, Nasir takes a different path. He starts going to meetings where atrocities on Muslims in various countries are discussed. He gives up his jeans and parka for traditional clothes and distributes flyers. He finally leaves for Pakistan to join a training camp for terrorists. The film

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90 Sternberg offers an interesting interpretation of Khalid’s character as a member of the first generation of British South Asian diaspora, comparing his idea of tolerance to that many white British people of the same age, represented in the film by the older White lady (a real life person who walked on to the set without realizing it) who apologises when a woman of British Pakistani origin is harassed by several young boys (Sternberg: 2008, 92-93).
presents this as one possible reaction to racialised victimisation that Yasmin and her family are subjected to. It also again highlights the role of the discourse, specifically media discourse, in shaping identities. Nasir is often shown looking at pictures and videos of atrocities committed on Muslims. The development of Nasir’s and Yasmin’s individual identities follow different courses, in spite of the similar experience that shakes both their worlds. That they are brother and sister only shows how divergent and heterogeneous identities can be in one family (like in the TV series Britz) and by extension in a community.

A potential problem in the representation of the brother’s and sister’s characters is noted by Silke Stroh. In comparison to Nasir, Yasmin and even her father come across as “good Muslims” (Stroh, 2010: 247). This might lead to the “establish[ment] of a new stereotype, an acceptable other, a liberal Muslim that can be manipulated and domesticated, and [...]defining any Muslim falling outside this framework as extreme” (Poole, 2002: 92, 112).

Moreover, the film ends with Yasmin and her father left alone. Nasir leaves his father a farewell note and tells his sister he is going and Faysal walks away from the house, his future not very certain. Khalid resigns, “He has gone. I’m growing old, Yasmin, old” (Yasmin). There is an absence of any young British Muslim male subjectivity that Ahmed finds disturbing. (Ahmed, 2009: 287).

Rehana Ahmed cites Claire Alexander’s study on male Muslim subjectivities, to come to the conclusion that a “hyper-masculinity” is often exaggerated in representations of British Muslim men. This in her opinion is frequently configured as ‘compensatory’’: Muslim men are equated with ‘a failing masculine identity’ that attempts to compensate for its failure through the aggressive assertion of its (limited) power over the community’s women as well as through protest and violence directed beyond the community (2009: 287).

Most often this “hyper-masculinised” subjectivity is ascribed to the oppressive nature of “Islamic patriarchal culture”, particularly “located in a liberal Britain” (Ahmed, 2009: 287). To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon it would however be more helpful “to ground these subjectivities in their material conditions and make visible the hidden structural violence of a liberal capitalist society which subordinates a large proportion of its Muslim inhabitants” (Ahmed, 2009: 287).
When looked at closely, the film *Yasmin* does contextualise both Nasir’s and Faysal’s identities, with regard to discursive economic and media forces that affect them. Multiple sequences showing their neighbourhood situate the characters in the not-so-well-to-do section of society. Media, as described earlier, figures also heavily in the development of Nasir’s identity in the film. However, both these characters vanish at the end of the film. What is lacking is an agency, similar to Yasmin’s, in the male characters. In her last conversation with Nasir when he tells her he is leaving for the training camps, Yasmin says, “I preferred you as a drug dealer” (*Yasmin*), implying in Ahmed’s words “the only two available options for him” (Ahmed, 2009: 294). Whereas Yasmin’s future remains ambiguous, as her last meeting with John shows, her brother’s is fixed. It is here that the film narrative forecloses the possibility of an alternative, third subjectivity available to young male British Muslims (Ahmed, 2009: 287).
Concluding Remarks
This study has taken on the task of analysing representations of British South Asian diasporic identities in contemporary British audio-visual media. Multiple discourses have affected the representation and construction of these identities historically. Colonialism, the most significant of these, produced colonised South Asians as the coloniser’s, Britain’s, Other. The process of Othering, through the creation of binaries by which the Self and the Other were contained in mutually exclusive groups, was key to the creation of hierarchies which justified and enabled domination and oppression. The process of Othering or creation of identities occurs in the field of representation. Narratives, historical, ethnographic, anthropological, literary and audio-visual provide space for representations of identities. In the colonial era, as can been seen, these narratives have functioned as the site of Othering, where the Colonised, among them South Asians, have been reduced to objects of representation and a single homogenous group in need of domination. This has involved a complete denial of diversity amongst the Colonised, their identities oversimplified, bound together by a single overarching attribute like skin colour, which becomes the sole representative of all the traits that are attributed to the group to facilitate and justify its domination. The representational practice called stereotyping is just such a reductionist simplification and serves to maintain hierarchies and asymmetrical power relations by means of producing ‘commonly known truths’ about the Other, in this case the Colonised. Furthermore, this strategic representational practice denies the object of representation, the Other or the Colonised, a voice or the opportunity to speak for itself (themselves) and is silenced, reinforcing what is said about it by the Self or the Coloniser.

Political decolonisation has led to a rethinking of these hierarchical relationships and the aspects of power that have affected construction and representations of identities. The postcolonial discourse has deconstructed such narrative representations, making the intentions behind them transparent. The traditional approach of conceptualising identities in a dichotomous fashion has been contested, giving way to a hybrid, dynamic, heterogeneous, ambivalent understanding. Moreover, the former Colonised are no longer silenced, as they were in the colonial era, and self-representations have become possible.

For a multicultural, multi-ethnic society like Britain that owes its very multicultural and multi-ethnic make up to immigrants from former colonies, this rethinking has involved an
overhaul of organically fixed notions of Britishness or British identity to make it more flexible and plural. However, this understanding of British identities did not come immediately after decolonisation or the first major wave of immigration. As explained in detail in chapter two, the reworking of what Britishness used to mean, to include the identities of coloured citizens of the country was a long struggle against discrimination. Though they no longer qualified technically as the Colonised, skin colour became the determinant factor in processes of Othering. Hand in hand with the (legalised) discrimination faced by coloured citizens of Britain in social life, processes of Othering were also at play in the cultural arena of representation. The racial Other was essentialised and marginalised and represented stereotypically. Hierarchies privileging white Britons were established, manifested and justified in a way not all that dissimilar to those practised in the colonial era.

The struggle against such representation and for rights of self-representation, also outlined in chapter two, saw an initial coming together of coloured ethnic minorities in Britain to form a unified group, i.e. Black Britons. The basis for this unified movement was a shared history of colonisation and continued discrimination on the basis of skin colour. The recognition that this group is made up of many plural identities has been a development spanning the last 30 years.

However, recent events both on a global scale and locally in Britain have provoked the question of whether the colonial mindset still lurks under the surface? And whether forms of representation of identities still involve Othering and have an underlying colonial power structure? These questions continue to be relevant in contemporary cultures due to of the emergence of a (new?) category of difference. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers in New York in 2001 and the London bombings of 2005, as well as the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the fear of an impending war in Iran, this category is religion, and the Other is the Islamic Other. In Britain the majority of British Muslims are of South Asian ethnicity and have historically been the colonised Other as well as the racial Other and ethnic Other. Even though the categories have shifted from race to ethnicity and further to religion, the group of people who are Othered has remained the same.

Against the backdrop of such deliberation, chapter three includes a close analysis of representations of British South Asian diasporic identities in contemporary British media. Using
the changed conception of identities, it looks for representation of aspects like hybridity,
dynamicity (movement across space and time), heterogeneity, ambivalence and performativity as
well as processes of Othering in television and film texts with British South Asian characters
including British Muslims of South Asian origin. The television series *The Kumars At No. 42*
(BBC, 2001-2006) and *Mumbai Calling* (ITV, 2009), both comedies, are analysed for the
representation of the potential of hybrid identities in subverting traditional conceptions of the
Self and the Other as mutually exclusive identities. The former has a predominantly British
South Asian cast and uses the concept of hybridity not just in its format, a mix between a chat
show and a sitcom, with fiction and non-fiction entwined with each other, but thematises it on
various levels with its content, script, setting, and characters, blurring clearly set boundaries and
accompanying conventions, and using comic irony to subvert these. *Mumbai Calling* on the other
hand, also featuring Sanjeev Kapoor from *The Kumars At No. 42*, plays with the popular
stereotype of the Indian call centre. It uses this setting as a literal exploration of cross-cultural
dialogue between the former Coloniser, Britain, and the former Colonised, India. Using the
format of a sitcom, the British South Asian protagonist, Kenny Gupta, is the link between the
Indian employees and the white British bosses. Hybridity is a chief element, with the call centre
being conceived quite literally as a liminal space between cultures where dialogue occurs. Like
*The Kumars At No. 42*, a chief strategy it uses to subvert traditional hierarchies between the Self
and the Other is irony, produced through comic exaggeration and inversion of stereotypes.

Hybridity is also a chief element in the representation of British South Asian identities in
the television adaptation of Meera Syal’s novel *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (BBC, 2005),
which explores the friendship between three British women of South Asian origin. In addition to
exploring the ‘in-betweenness’ of identities of diasporic individuals with issues regarding
culture, it looks at the temporal aspect of hybridity. Here the liminal space is a dialectic between
the past and the present, and a hybrid synthesis of these the outcome for identities. It thereby
emphasizes the aspect of journey over time and the constant evolution of identities with time as
key features of diasporic identities, British South Asians among them.

It is this fundamental aspect of journey, i.e. dynamicity of identities that the documentary
*A Sikh’s Journey Home* (BBC, 2008) also highlights. The text follows a British South Asian
family planning a trip to India, in order to acquaint the children with the country of their origin.
It problematises an organic notion of a fixed ‘home’ and emphasizes the idea of ‘routes’ and through this, the fluid idea of ‘home’. It features various geographical locations that qualify as home for Dari Mankoo who, though of South Asian origin, was born and brought up in East Africa, from where he migrated to Britain. Now he plans to revisit India, a place where he has previously experienced life-changing spirituality, but ends up moving to Australia. Amongst these different geographical locations is the aspect of journey or route, which is what the documentary represents as home – an integral source of identity.

The differentiated, hybrid notions of British South Asian diasporic identity as represented in texts like *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, *A Sikh’s Journey Home*, *The Kumars At No. 42* and *Mumbai Calling* all challenge and subvert traditional notions of self-contained, monadic identities used in the colonial discourse and race relations discourse to create hierarchies. However, these audio-visual texts, apart from their entertainment value, all share singular focus of their plot on the experience of the British South Asian diaspora, with their chief protagonists being predominantly British South Asians.  

Another text that also focuses on British South Asian diaspora is the documentary titled *The Great British Asian Invasion*, broadcast on Channel 4 in 2004. In order to explore the British South Asian diasporic experience, the documentary uses a system of categorisation that is intended to highlight the heterogeneous identities that the term British South Asian denotes. In doing so it discusses different generations of British South Asians and the differences in their respective experiences. It further classifies each generation on the basis of profession and, with regard to the first generation of British South Asians, this profession is further linked to the part of the South Asian subcontinent they come from. The fast-moving documentary brings out a number of intertextual and intermedial references with techniques of montage and features interviews with popular celebrities, some of them British South Asians. The narrative is accompanied by a voice-over who tells the ‘story’ of this particular diasporic group. As, Hilary P. Dannenberg argues in case of the documentary, *The Great British Black Invasion* (2006), it is the voice-over and the authority tying together the various elements of montage and the interviews in the process of giving information and explaining in a highly pedagogic style that

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90 *Mumbai Calling* might at first glance appear to be different since it is set in India and includes a number of Indian characters and some white British characters, in addition to Kenny Gupta, the only British South Asian. But looking at it closely as the analysis presented in chapter 3 does, the issues like hybridity thematised here are issues that that undeniably lie at the heart of diasporic identities.
also makes *The Great British Asian Invasion* problematic (2011: 85-86). Apart from the use of the words ‘us’ and ‘them’ by the voice-over, clearly signifying the Self and the Other, the white British and the British South Asian respectively, the over-simplified textbook structure, with the agenda of explaining British South Asian identities in their entirety, is very similar to familiar practice of representing the Other in the colonial discourse as well as the race relations discourse.

A similar simplification with regard to representations of British South Asian identities can be observed in the popular police procedural *Life On Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007). The critical perspective offered by Sam Tyler, the protagonist from contemporary times, on both policing methods and socio-political issues in 1970s Britain does not extend completely to the issue of racism. Though constantly upholding the beacon of political correctness even in this regard, for which Sam is ridiculed by his colleagues in the 70s, Sam fails to go beyond skin colour as the sole signifier of the identity of his British South Asian former girlfriend Maya. The representation mimics the function of skin as a fetish in the representational practice of a stereotype, as the analysis shows. It disregards the multifaceted, hybrid, heterogeneous conception of identities in ways similar to those of the colonial discourse and race relations discourse.

In complete contrast to the depiction of British South Asian identities in *Life On Mars*, where skin colour becomes the singular criterion around which identity is represented, *The Apprentice* (BBC, Series 1, 2005) follows the trend of other reality TV series emulating the post-racial ethos, where the issue of skin colour or ethnicity could be considered conspicuous because of the complete silence on the subject. Including contestants from various ethnic backgrounds in all its series, business acumen seems to be the sole criterion for selecting a winner, underlining an assimilationist ideal in a multi-ethnic, multicultural society. However, the conventions of the genre of reality TV do allow space for unscripted dialogue and action, where the contestants perform ‘reality’. It is by this means that Raj and Saira, contestants in the first series of *The Apprentice*, perform their ethnic and cultural identities and use this not just to secure a win for their team but also to undermine the colour-blind approach of the series.

Another series that thematises the connection of performance and identity is the legal drama *Silk*. In its episode dedicated to coloured ethnic minorities, a British South Asian policewoman, Rachna Ali, is accused of being racist because she calls her black colleague a
‘nigger’. Located, unlike *The Apprentice*, clearly in the fictional world, the idea of performance here is slightly different, as it is used ironically, mimics a racist situation and the fixed, stable, identities that these situations produce to undermine and subvert them. The self-reflexive approach that the episode uses in thematising identity construction as a performative act (the actors playing roles and creating identities of characters and these characters further performing identities) highlights not just the construct character of fixed identities but questions and challenges this by making them susceptible to ironic mimicry. Another aspect of identities that the series emphasizes is its multiple facets, the multiple subject positions that individuals occupy and the differentiated nature of identities that this implies. Both in the context of the individual and well as the groups these individuals might belong to, the series shows how solidarity and affiliations based on shared subject positions change from context to context and person to person.

These multiple facets of identities also play a key role in the representation of British South Asian identities in *Britz* (2007), a feature-length thriller, broadcast on Channel 4. Looking at the repercussions of the war on terror for a pair of British Muslim siblings, the two-part-series emphasizes heterogeneous identities of British Pakistani Muslims. It explores overlaps and affiliations as well as differences between various subject positions that individuals occupy which in turn create a degree of ambivalence, questioning hegemonic, fixed conceptions of group identities. The soap opera *EastEnders* (BBC, 2009-2010) also uses a similar technique with regard to the representation of its British Muslim characters. Through its emphasis on the sexuality, gender and religion of the characters of the Masood family and the interaction between these facets of identity, it shows how different facets are articulated in different contexts by the different characters, highlighting again the notion that identities cannot be fixed and stable. Both these television texts pay special attention to the rising hegemonic conceptions of British Muslim identities as homogeneous and fixed, especially in connection with terrorism and religious conservatism in the context of 9/11 and 7/7.

The analyses of the feature films *My Son The Fanatic*, *Ae Fond Kiss* and *Yasmin* that form the last section of this study follow in the same vein, looking at representations of British Pakistani Muslims. Like many other British South Asian diasporic films, the plot of these also revolves around inter-generational conflict, and relationships with the majority white Britons.
Though the first film analysed My Son The Fanatic (1997) was made and released before the attack on the twin towers, it explores some of the discussions associated with rising religious conservatism and fanaticism with regard to Islam which have become more intense since the attacks. Scripted by renowned author Hanif Kureishi, the film shows differing attitudes of father and son towards life and religion, inverting the traditional conservative father and liberal son relationship. Apart from thematising the aspects of diasporic identity such as questions of home, the British Pakistani Muslim protagonists are each different from the other, having different priorities in life based on differing experiences and affiliations through which their identities are constructed and form a heterogeneous group. Particularly with regard to religion, the attitudes of the liberal father and the conservative son are so one-dimensional that each of them could be considered fanatics in their own right. The film successfully decouples the word fanaticism with its hegemonic association with Islamic conservatism, exploring how liberalism and ambivalence could reach extremist proportions and have violent and destructive repercussions, as it is the father who resorts to physical violence against his son and is left by his family in the end.

Ae Fond Kiss (2004) also thematises heterogeneous British Pakistani Muslim diasporic identities of a family from Glasgow. The love plot with Casim, a second generation British Muslim of Pakistani origin, and Roisin, an Irish Catholic music teacher, further juxtaposes two postcolonial, religious British minorities with each other but at the same time creates an opposition between them. Roisin’s consistent attitude towards her relationship with Casim in spite of opposition from her priest and the consequences for her job signifies her independence from familial, religious and cultural bonds, which play more of a determining role for Casim, and are a reason for his constant vacillation between his love for Roisin and his family. As the analysis of the film in chapter 3 shows, this opposition could be interpreted as an opposition between cultural conservatism and cultural liberalism which hinges itself on the singular factor of skin colour, repeating as in Life On Mars, a racialised pattern of representation.

The last film Yasmin (2004) is the only film that could be considered a direct response to the discrimination of British Muslims in the wake of the attacks on the twin towers, building these events as a critical turning point in its narrative. It also constructs British Muslim identities as heterogeneous, exploring features of diasporic identities like home, journey and hybridity. It further explores agency as an important aspect related with understanding identity as
performance through the representation of the female protagonist, contesting hegemonic notions of Muslim women as oppressed victims. However, the pattern falters when it comes to the representation of the male British Pakistani Muslim characters in the film, as Rehana Ahmed identifies in her analysis of the film, who fall into two categories - potential terrorists or helpless victims (2009).

In the light of all the analyses of diverse contemporary British audio-visual media texts it is but evident that the recognition of changing understandings of identities arising from large-scale global migration and the development of multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies has had a huge impact on their representations of British South Asian identities. The majority of the analysed texts construct their British South Asian characters as hybrid and explore the feature of dynamicity with regard to journey as ‘home’, both in the sense of space and time. Furthermore, they represent the multiple facets or subject positions that individuals depend on to make their subjectivities meaningful, and show how in groups certain affiliations are created based on shared facets, but stress that differences are ever-present. Emphasizing a notion of ambivalence that arises from similarities and contradictions and they undermine a hegemonic conclusive and homogenous identity. My Son The Fanatic for instance represents the concept of ambivalence on a meta-level, displaying not just extreme positions that an ambivalent identity of an individual may represent, but the ambivalence that arises when this extreme position interacts with other extreme positions. Some texts, like The Kumars At No. 42 and Mumbai Calling, use comic irony and inversion of traditional hegemonically fixed roles of the Self and the Other, bringing in the idea of performance to actively subvert such notions of identity that have arisen and been maintained through the colonial discourse and the post-decolonisation race-relations discourse. Others, like The Apprentice (arguably inadvertently) and Silk (even if it may be considered a tokenist representation), provide their players with agency, emphasizing that identity is a performative act and can be used to subvert traditional hierarchies based on the Self and the Other.

However, it is also undeniable that some texts still show representational practices that bear an uncanny similarity to those of the colonial discourse and the post-decolonisation race-relations discourse. These representational practices involve processes of Othering and create binaries of the Self and the Other, signifying asymmetrical power relations. Construction of
stereotypes has been and is still a common practice that reduces and fixes identities to establish and maintain power over the Other. The narrative voice of *The Great British Asian Invasion* establishes such an authoritative power by rendering the British South Asian diaspora completely explainable, fixing and reducing it as the Other of majority white Britain, a group the narrator has no reservations in saying she belongs to. *Life On Mars*, in spite of the efforts at representing a critical perspective on the past, falls into its own trap, by representing skin colour as the singular most significant factor in the representation of the British South Asian diaspora, essentialising the diverse identities of the various characters of South Asian descent on this basis. Similarly the love plot of *Ae Fond Kiss* can also be understood as emphasising skin colour as the singular signifying factor for cultural conservatism or cultural liberalism, continuing therefore in the line of racialised representations of the British South Asian diaspora.

With regard to the question of a new category of Othering, i.e. religion, that has risen in significance over the last decade, the texts analysed in this study also show a remarkable representation of heterogeneous and ambivalent British Pakistani Muslim identities. Across all the texts analysed in this study two thematic aspects have found increasing association with Islam. Firstly, is that of cultural conservatism and patriarchal dominance, secondly, religious fundamentalism and terrorism. *Britz*, for instance, deals with all these issues in its narrative about siblings Nasima and Sohail, both of whom opt for completely different life paths, and represent radical positions in a range of British Muslim identities. Through the use of what at first glance appears to be a rigid binary structure, a two-part narrative showing two extremely different perspectives, it subverts exactly this by showing how identities are multifaceted and solidarities are based on different overlapping facets. British Pakistani Muslim identities, as represented in *Britz*, are determined by context and experience, varying vastly from individual to individual, to the extent that siblings may differ radically from one other. *EastEnders* and *Yasmin* thematise cultural conservatism on the one hand but their representation of British Pakistani Muslim female identities challenge the hegemonic conception of the oppressed Muslim women, and thus patriarchal value systems on the other.

However, in spite of this general trend towards representing British Muslim identities as heterogeneous, texts like *Ae Fond Kiss* fall short in aspects discussed earlier by displaying a lurking presence of racialised structures of representation. What is most striking however in a
discussion on contemporary audio-visual representation of British Muslim identities is an almost complete absence of self-representation post-9/11, an observation made in the introduction “A Divided Kingdom? Reflections on Multi-Ethnic Britain in the New Millenium” to the volume of essays entitled *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. The question of who is representing whom regains its critical value in the light of this observation (Eckstein et al., 2008: 15). Furthermore, it is in the light of this question that the move towards the mainstream in the area of audio-visual self representations of the British South Asian diaspora – a move that has been qualified as a move “beyond the burden of representation” (Mercer as quoted in Eckstein et al, 2008: 15), to a “cinema of freedom” (Malik: 1996) – has to be viewed more critically.

In conclusion, this study raises further questions deserving of future academic interest. As noted, the present social, political and cultural scenario in Britain is marked by an undeniable rise in Islamophobia and discrimination, even of an institutionalised nature, against British Muslims of South Asian descent, exemplified by incidents not just of religious but of racial profiling. Does this demand another organised, politicised wave of self-representations, as in the 70s and 80s with respect to the issue of race, but now for religion? How significant is it that amongst the texts analysed here those that show a perpetuation of racialised patterns of representation are made by white Britons? Are British South Asians, and amongst them the majority of British Muslims, really beyond the burden of representation? Or could the deafening silence in terms of self-representation with regard to religion be indicative of a new form of protest? Is it a protest that involves an assertion of identities not requiring a verbal justification for equality? Or is this silence a mere repetition of old patterns of power play and domination, where only the categories and designations have changed, but the people involved at either end of the asymmetry still remain the same?
Primary Texts Cited

Films


Television

- *Silk (Series 1, Episode 4)*. Created by Peter Moffat. Pref. Maxine Peake, Rupert Penry Jones, Syreeta Kumar. BBC One, Mar 2011. Television.

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91 Pilot was aired in 2007 on ITV, however, the series was launched in 2009.
Secondary Works Cited ¹


¹Secondary texts from the media- television and film are cited ‘in-text’ (with information regarding channel/ director and year). The exceptions are *Goodness Gracious Me, The Jewel In The Crown, Black Narcissus, Bend It Like Beckham, East Is East, The Party* and *The Millionairess* where DVDs have been used for the purpose of citation.
² n. pag.- no page number
³ n.d.- no date


ª n.t.- no title

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5 n.a.- no author

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Schlote, Christiane. “‘The sketch’s the thing wherein we’ll catch the conscience of the audience’ Strategies and Pitfalls of Ethnic TV comedies in Britain, the United States, and Germany”. *Cheeky Fictions- Laughter and the Postcolonial*. Ed. Susanne Reichland, Mark Stein. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 177-190. Print.


Erklärung/ Affidavit


Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,


Aparna Bhar

Munich, 14th Sept 2012

To whom it may concern,

This is to certify that this dissertation has been researched and written solely by me, in accordance to prescribed academic rules and regulations. All the sources used to elaborate the topic and support the analysis have been acknowledged. In addition, I would like to confirm that this dissertation has not been used previously to gain any academic degree (including a doctoral degree) at any other academic institution or university, and that no such attempt has been made.

Aparna Bhar