

## Qawwālī and Home: 'Alī in (Im)migrant Identity

Hussein Rashid

### Introduction

*Qawwālī* is an Islamicate music form particular to South Asia and found in communities of the South Asian diaspora. Many lyrics of the genre relate to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (600-661 CE), considered by many Sufi orders to be the successor to the spiritual authority of Prophet Muḥammad (570-632 CE). 'Alī's role as warrior, both in physical and spiritual terms, is an important part of his hagiography and is celebrated in many *qawwālī*. The centrality of 'Alī persists as an integral part of the tradition, although the form has changed over time and adapted to new environments as it moves with immigrant communities. In diaspora communities the style and instrumentation of the *qawwālī* changes to reflect new cultural sensibilities and the lyrical tradition is interpreted in different ways. For diasporics, the figure of 'Alī takes on a particular significance, not as a spiritual master, but as a model for justice and resistance against oppression. In Britain, musicians of South Asian descent are actively using the *qawwālī* and the figure of 'Alī to address issues of racial marginalization.

### Qawwālī

As an art form, *qawwālī* is part of the *samā'*, or spiritual concert, of the Chishtī Sufi Order, and is particular to South Asia. The term is first introduced in an 11<sup>th</sup> century text *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, although it is not until the time of Amīr Khusraw (1244-1325) that the term is used in the way we understand it today to refer to a type of performance of a lyrical text.<sup>1</sup> Peter Manuel discusses the place of Muslim devotional literature and its performative aspect: “Muslim devotional music has constituted a significant part of North Indian musical culture since the thirteenth century, if not earlier. ... While the Chishti and Naqshabandi Sufi orders embraced

---

1 Alison Arnold, *South Asia: The Indian Subcontinent*, vol. 5, Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (New York: Garland, 2000), 751-752.

music as a means to attaining mystical annihilation, Indo-Muslim dynasts, with a very few exceptions, ardently patronized court music and dance.”<sup>2</sup> The Sufi orders mentioned above are two that incorporated music into their ritual practice, known as *samāʿ*, literally meaning “listening.” Poems set to music are considered an important part of spiritual advancement, and the *qawwālī* is the favored form of the Chishtī order.<sup>3</sup>

Regula Qureshi describes the *qawwālī* as consisting of:

a large body of poems, with tunes for singing and metric patterns for drumming, usually on the barrel-shaped *dholak*. These poems are sung by a group of *qawwāls* led by one or two solo singers and supported melodically by the portable harmonium that has superseded the indigenous *sarangi* or *sitar*. Handclapping by the singers intensifies the rhythmic accentuation. Ensemble structure and performing style make possible extended singing, a strongly articulated musical meter, and a flexible structuring process adapted to the changing spiritual needs of the *samāʿ*’ listeners.<sup>4</sup>

However, she is also careful to note that the text remains of paramount importance to the Sufi practitioners, and the music is used only to intensify the meanings of the words, not overshadow them.<sup>5</sup> The confluence of Muslim and Indic cultural languages<sup>6</sup> establishes the *qawwālī* as an “Islamicate” literature. Marshal Hodgson defines “Islamicate” as “not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.”<sup>7</sup> In other

---

2 Peter Lamarche Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 123.

3 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, “Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition,” in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, ed. Stephen Blum et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 109.

4 Ibid., 107. See also Peter Lamarche Manuel, *Cassette Culture*, 123.

5 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, “Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition,” 109.

6 Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 3-4.

7 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Classical Age of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of

words, it has its origins amongst Muslims, but is part of a larger cultural context that allows non-Muslims to participate in and contribute to it. This diversity is demonstrated by incorporation of Islamicate literatures in forms such as Bollywood films.<sup>8</sup>

This performance of the text pulls on the “associational and connotational power” of the rich poetic idiom that attempts to convey a great deal of meaning in the fewest possible words.<sup>9</sup> This compactness of language means that the poetic form of the *ghazal* is found in the overwhelming majority of *qawwālīs*,<sup>10</sup> but it is not the only type of poetry that makes up this literary genre. The text can also be composed of quatrains, couplets, or single-lines from poetic forms other than the *ghazal*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, *bayts*, couplets, from multiple *ghazals* can be incorporated, regardless of language, in order to deliver a thematic message. The use of short phrases from larger poetic pieces, or by using short poems, is part of the use of a common pool of symbols and poetry that evoke larger ideas and stories. The performative nature of the *qawwālī* means that while there is a base sequence of types of verses, the actual order of the verses is never fixed.<sup>12</sup> Because of the musical and interactive part of the performance, the text is never presented the same way twice, allowing for a near infinite use of the same material.<sup>13</sup>

The *qawwālī* uses multiple languages in the same text, has a denseness of meaning that allows for multiple interpretations, and also evokes broader concepts due to the intertextual nature of the material. Like any cultural production, as Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence note, it

---

Chicago Press, 1974), 59.

8 Mukul Kesavan, “Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema,” in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State*, ed. Zoya Hasan and Kali for Women (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994); Raza Mir, ““Voh Yar Hai jo Khusbu ki Tarah / Jis ki Zuban Urdu ki Tarah”: The Friendly Association Between Urdu Poetry and Hindi Film Music,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* 15 (2000): 315-321.

9 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 83.

10 Ibid., 86.

11 Ibid., 66-69.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 4.

changes in “response to the political, ideological, and technological transformations of the contemporary world.”<sup>14</sup> As a result, although conceived as a devotional text, the *qawwālī* quickly takes on political overtones, speaking for justice and against oppression.<sup>15</sup> In the modern period, many *qawwāls*, considered “traditional” stylists, use their performances to critique oppressive state structures.<sup>16</sup>

## **Diaspora**

The richness of meaning of *qawwālī* literature, its penetration in as a cultural form amongst South Asians, and its adaptability position it as a good literature for diaspora communities to utilize in creating a sense of home for themselves. I use the term “(im)migrants” to define members of a second-generation or later<sup>17</sup> cohort who are no longer immigrants, but who are not wholly accepted in their host societies. This in-between, or liminal, state is a function of the unequal power relationships between (im)migrants and the host society, and is also the impetus for the creation of their hybrid works. I believe the term “(im)migrants” captures the unsettled nature of these individuals and the sense that they are still in motion in search of a home.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of home is distinct from the idea of a homeland. The homeland is a physical space where immigrants may wish to return to, a tendency often found in first-generation

---

14 Bruce B. Lawrence and Carl W. Ernst, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1.

15 Qamar-ul Huda, “Introduction,” *The Muslim World* 97, no. 4 (2007), 544.

16 Shemeem Burney Abbas, “Risky Knowledge in Risky Times: Political Discourses of *Qawwālī* and *Sūfīana-kalam* in Pakistan-Indian Sufism,” *The Muslim World* 97, no. 4 (2007), 629-630.

17 For simplicity’s sake I will simply use the term “second-generation” to refer to second and later generations.

18 I am careful not to use Homi Bhabha’s idea of the “unhomely,” as he focuses more on the idea of the rupture between private and public. However, at several points he does approach what I am attempting to describe. For example, he says the “private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy,” (p. 13) and quoting Freud’s idea of the *unheimlich* “the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light” (p. 10). See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 9-18.

immigrants and described as “the myth of return,”<sup>19</sup> or *heimkehrillusion* (lit. “the illusion of returning home”).<sup>20</sup> (Im)migrants do not have this same desire to return to the homeland of their forebears because, as William Safran articulates, “Although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore the homing impulse has to be seen as a cultural desire, not a geographic one. The children of immigrants are not part of the host society’s mainstream, or “white,” culture. “White” in this instance is not an ethnic or racial category, but a marker of the dominant culture.<sup>22</sup> This lack of full acceptance is indicated by the use of hyphenated identities,<sup>23</sup> such as South Asian-American or British-Asian.<sup>24</sup> Hyphenated identity is explained as having three possible causes: symbolic ethnicity, segmented assimilation, and racialized ethnicity.<sup>25</sup> Each of these causes also results in different uses of the hyphen and indicates different levels of agency in the distance the group experiences from the mainstream. However, since these causes are not mutually exclusive, the resulting expressions of identity have a great deal of overlap, and I treat them as an undifferentiated whole for the sake of my argument. The awareness of subjugation creates

---

19     Badr Dahya, “Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers?,” *Race & Class* 14, no. 3 (1973), 247.; Katy Gardner, “Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti Images of Home and Away,” *Man* 28, no. 1 (1993), 14.; Raj Mehta and Russell W. Belk, “Artifacts, Identity, and Transition: Favorite Possessions of Indians and Indian Immigrants to the United States,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 17, no. 4 (1991), 402. See also Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

20     William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991), 86.

21     Ibid., 91.

22     The use of the term “white,” has a long pedigree in Sociology, and as a short-hand is less fraught with problems than “American,” or “British.” Inherent in the term is a sense of dynamic relations of power that change over time and place.

23     Hyphenated identities come into vogue in the 1960s and 1970s in the US and the UK as a means of resisting racial marginalization, and draws heavily on the language and thought of the Black Power Movement of the time. See Wannu Wibulswasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee, “Asian American Displacements,” in *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*, ed. Wannu Wibulswasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 7; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 43.

24     Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity: Second-Generation South Asian Americans Traverse a Transnational World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 2.

25     Ibid.

linkages intra-nationally amongst other subjugated groups and internationally amongst co-ethnics.<sup>26</sup> The presence of South Asians around the world, and the awareness of extended families in various countries,<sup>27</sup> allows (im)migrants to be part of a larger transnational grouping.<sup>28</sup> This transnational cultural association is a component of the idea of diaspora.

Diaspora, as an analytic term, has a multitude of meanings,<sup>29</sup> and I wish to clarify my usage before proceeding. One way to think about diaspora is to differentiate between a physical diaspora and the idea of “diaspora as metaphor.”<sup>30</sup> Physical diasporas<sup>31</sup> can be further divided into types such as classical, victims, labor, trade, and imperial.<sup>32</sup> The physical diaspora of South Asians is composed of several of these types, most notably the labor diaspora, which is defined as the movement of members of an ethnic group for economic reasons and who maintain a distinct ethnic identity in their host society.<sup>33</sup> Robert Cohen, a typologist of diasporas, also discusses the idea of cultural diaspora, which is akin to the idea of diaspora as metaphor. He believes that cultural diasporas can exist independently of physical diasporas. According to André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “Diaspora as metaphor... [is] a way to emphasize the powerful ... relationships between minorities living in several different countries.”<sup>34</sup> One reason for

---

26 Ibid., 10, 13.; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American: Indian Immigrants and the Cultures of Citizenship* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 16.

27 Wannu Wibulswasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee, “Asian American Displacements,” 5; Dhooleka Sarhadi Raj, *Where Are You From?: Middle-Class Migrants in the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 175.

28 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 19-20; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*, 125.

29 André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “On Homelands and Diasporas: An Introduction,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

30 Ibid., 7.

31 For definitions of this type of diaspora, see Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 23, 26.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 57.

34 André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “On Homelands and Diasporas: An Introduction,” 17.

rejecting assimilation is that immigrants are alienated from their host societies and are constructed as racialized others.

Various physical diasporas resulted in the migration of South Asians around the world. The children of these diasporics are now part of a cultural diaspora, who are not interested in being associated with a homeland but with a home.<sup>35</sup> Several sociologists have questioned whether the term diaspora can be applied to second-generation South Asians, preferring the term transnational community instead.<sup>36</sup> However, I believe such a critique relies only on the idea of a physical diaspora, and that the idea of a cultural diaspora encompasses the idea of transnational communities. On the other side of the argument are those who argue that the idea of diaspora is about creating cultural isolation,<sup>37</sup> but I believe such an argument glosses over the sociologic concerns of minority communities. The “diasporic community”<sup>38</sup> is not about the minority remaining the minority, but about fighting marginalization and redefining the mainstream.<sup>39</sup> The concept of the South Asian cultural diaspora closely mirrors Paul Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic:<sup>40</sup> a cultural system that is not specific to a nation, but that is localized to national concerns. The idea of hybridity is predicated on the unequal power relationships needed for the formation of a diasporic consciousness. In addition, hybrid creations aid in giving a local identification to the diasporic community.

## **Hybridity**

Mikhail Bakhtin argues that, “at any given moment of its historical existence, language is

---

35 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 180.

36 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 172-173; Dhooleka Sarhadi Raj, *Where Are You From?*, 168.

37 Jonathan Friedman, “Diasporization, Globalization, and Cosmopolitan Discourse,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 145.

38 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 183.

39 *Ibid.*, 210.

40 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

heteroglot from top to bottom.”<sup>41</sup> According to Graham Allen, heteroglossia is “the recognition of the numerous different ‘languages’, of social and professional groups, of classes and literary movements, operating in society at any one time.”<sup>42</sup> Thus the heteroglot language deals with the tensions between the past and present use of language, for example the ways language was used in different periods of the past compared to the way different groups use language in the present.

The idea of heteroglossia implies the meeting of “languages,” and this meeting gives rise to the idea of the hybrid. Bakhtin defines hybrid as when “two ‘languages’ ... come together and to a certain extent are crossed with each other.”<sup>43</sup> The meeting between languages is not necessarily a meeting of equals as each language occupies a different space in cultural power structures. Heteroglossia leads to a clash of languages, which exist in a dialogic state. Therefore, it is only through heteroglossia that new meanings can enter into a language.<sup>44</sup> Saussure argues that the dominant language will incorporate the weaker language and become composite without losing its character.<sup>45</sup> Bakhtin’s vision acknowledges that both languages change by interacting with one another, and the clash does not necessarily lead to incorporation and loss of the weaker language by the stronger one. In instances when it does, the new composite language enters into a new heteroglot relationship with a different language because of the way its speakers interact with each other and other speakers of language.

By giving speakers a more active role in changing the language Bakhtin allows for us to envision two types of hybridity: organic and intentional. The organic hybrid is the natural construction of hybrid that emerges from heteroglossia. The origin and development of the Urdu language represents an organic hybrid. Urdu is the result of the long interaction amongst

---

41 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series; No. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 291.

42 Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, *The New Critical Idiom* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 29-30. See also M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 263, 272-273, 275.

43 *Ibid.*, 75.

44 *Ibid.*, 61.

45 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986), 194.

Turkish-influenced Arabicized Persian, Sanskrit, Braj B<sup>h</sup>āṣā, and K<sup>h</sup>aṛī Bolī to produce first *rekhtā* (mixed [language]) and finally *Urdū-e mu'allā*, literally “the exalted camp.”<sup>46</sup> The intentional hybrid is a subversive construction that allows a safe way to criticize current power relationships and acts of the primary power, whether political, social, economic or cultural.<sup>47</sup> I will focus more on intentional hybrids.

Bakhtin’s interest in language and hybridity focused on the novel and he did not believe that much of his theory applied to the epic poetry with which he was familiar. However, Jahan Ramazani has argued that Bakhtin’s theory is applicable to postcolonial poetry because of the mixed nature of the languages and forms.<sup>48</sup> Nargis Virani has also argued for the applicability of the model to the poetry of the Persian poet Jalāl ud-Dīn Rūmī.<sup>49</sup> Looking at *qawwālī* traditions, the relevance of Bakhtin’s thought seems obvious: it draws on multiple languages, the merging of different poetic traditions, and when combined with music, the placement of two different language systems together. The hybrid creation I am focusing on is the literary forms of *qawwālī*. This creation is being used to express (im)migrant identity and to make space in mainstream discourse for the inclusion of these (im)migrants. The various cultures that (im)migrants utilize in their creations are in constant communication with one another, adapting and changing due to their interactions. The ultimate goal is to create a change in the dominant culture that accepts (im)migrants as part of that culture; to create what Alba and Nee term a “composite culture.”<sup>50</sup>

---

46 Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell, *Hindi and Urdu since 1800: A Common Reader* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1990), 1-5.

47 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 75.

48 Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 17.

49 Nargis Virani, ““I am the Nightingale of the Merciful” Macaronic or Upside-Down?: The Mulamma'at of Jalal al-Din Rumi” (PhD diss, Harvard, 1999), 44-50. Although focused specifically on Rūmī, the idea of the macaronic, or heteroglot, verse, is applicable to a large part of Islamic literature. At the very least, the association of Arabic with Islam means that wherever Muslims go, Arabic goes with them. This movement of language establishes the basis for hybrid constructions.

50 Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10.

## Inglishtān<sup>51</sup>

The specific case-study I wish to investigate is the South Asian diaspora community in Great Britain. This community is racially marginalized, relatively well-defined, and is conscious of an Asian identity. Artists use *qawwālī* to express their sense of belonging, and pull on the figure of ‘Alī to indicate their involvement in their communities. In order to discuss the current sociological concerns of the second-generation, I would like to review the history of Asian immigration to Great Britain and the impact the long history of this immigration has had on British perceptions of Asians, particularly with regard to race. With an historical context, it becomes easier to analyze particular forces, especially that of race, that serve to marginalize Asian communities. One of the results of such marginalization is the creation of community identity that is almost oppositional in its nature to mainstream British society, but at the same time actively engaged with that society. As with any multi-ethnic society, mapping universal patterns of group interaction is impossible. The following history attempts to describe general trends, particularly in response to rhetoric from politicians, who are perceived as voices of authority. Since the argument is based on cross-cultural exchange amongst minority groups, points of tension amongst these groups are not discussed. In addition, class politics offer another avenue of group solidarity where the discussion of race is either radically transformed or altogether ignored. The South Asian response to British racial marginalization is simply one vector through which we can understand ethnic constructions.

As England was the seat of empire, South Asian immigration has been nearly continuous since the formation of the East India Trading Company in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, we can identify three distinct waves of immigration – here the wave metaphor is apt as it allows us to envision a continuity marked by peaks and troughs, rather than strongly demarcated periods. The three waves roughly correspond to the early colonial period, the late colonial period, and the post-colonial period.<sup>52</sup> The waves, and approximate dates for each, are outlined in the table

---

51 The Urdu “Inglishtān” translates as “England.” However, it is broadly understood to mean both Great Britain and the United Kingdom. In the following analysis, the term Britain is used to mean Great Britain and excludes Northern Ireland.

52 I am consciously using “post-colonial” to indicate a temporal relationship, rather than “postcolonial,”

below:

<i>Wave</i>	<i>Time Period</i>
Early Colonial Period - East India Company	1600-1857
Late Colonial Period - Early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century <sup>53</sup>	1857-1962
Post-Colonial Period - Late 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	1962-Present

**Figure 1: Periods of South Asian Immigration to the UK**

The latest wave in immigration to the UK from South Asia, and the largest so far, began in the 1960s. The key factor in the increase in immigration was the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, which made it easier for citizens of Commonwealth nations to migrate to the UK. Two other international events helped increase the number of Asians<sup>54</sup> settling in Britain. One event was the construction of the Mangla Dam in Mirpur (in present-day Pakistan), which displaced over 100,000 people. Some of these people resettled in Panjab, but significant numbers came to Great Britain. The other event is the mass migration of Asians out of East Africa, double-migrants, who fled Africanization policies that disenfranchised them.

Immigrants who did come to Britain as individuals during this wave were, like their predecessors, mostly male. Unlike the previous peaks in immigration, these men could sponsor their families, allowing for the creation of self-sustaining ethnic enclaves. Both the increase in

---

which I use with respect to models from literary theory.

53 India and Pakistan gained independence from the UK in 1947. However, immigration law in the UK did not change until 1962, hence the 15 year overlap from 1947-1962 in what I'm calling the "Late Colonial Period."

54 Starting in the 1980s, South Asians also adopt the label "Asians" for themselves.

immigration and the formation of ethnic enclaves caused a backlash. An anti-immigrant campaign headed by a Member of Parliament (MP), Enoch Powell, resulted in the passage of two laws: The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968 and the Immigration Act of 1971.<sup>55</sup> Both acts made it more difficult for immigrants of color to enter the UK. The racialization of British-ness continued, and became a more entrenched part of public discourse. Talal Asad discusses the evocation of race when the word “immigrant” is used, when he says:

In contemporary Britain, the word immigrant has come to be identified by public opinion with non-European settlers—largely people from the Caribbean and South Asia. This is significant because the term is applied to the offspring of these immigrants, even though they have been born in Britain, but it does not apply to white immigrants, who are, according to the 1981 census, a more numerous category than nonwhite immigrants.<sup>56</sup>

Enoch Powell became one of the more prominent figure in tying race to British identity in the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps his most famous speech, known as the “rivers of blood” speech,<sup>57</sup> was made on April 20, 1968, the same day as Hitler’s birthday. His speeches, grounded in his knowledge, convictions, and rhetorical skill, had a deep impact on the way Britons saw themselves.

Two parties with distinct racist biases, the National Front and the British National Party (BNP), both drew heavily from Powell’s visions. Their success at the polls further legitimized the notion that English meant white. For example, as late as 1993 the BNP won seats from the Tower Hamlets district, an area with a large, predominately Bangladeshi minority and this indicated the disenfranchisement of communities of color. Although there several people of color who are prominent within the organization, the Constitution of the BNP clearly states

[Section 1: 2b] The British National Party stands for the preservation of the national and

---

55 Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 100.

56 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 253.

57 Enoch Powell, “Rivers of Blood.” ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rivers\\_of\\_Blood](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rivers_of_Blood)).

ethnic character of the British people and is wholly opposed to any form of racial integration between British and non-European peoples.

...

[Section 2: 1] Membership of the BNP is strictly defined within the terms of, and our members also self define themselves within, the legal ambit of a defined 'racial group' this being 'Indigenous Caucasian' and defined 'ethnic groups' emanating from that Race.<sup>58</sup>

It was in this context of political and popular racist discourse that helped to define the political activism of the Asian community in the late 1980s. The second-generation of the third wave of immigration appear to have become more comfortable with their British identities and were not averse to demanding equal treatment under the law.<sup>59</sup> They not only mobilized politically, but became involved in anti-racist collectives and began to enter public discourse at the popular level. As race was one of the defining elements of the Asian community from a Briton's perspective, the Asian community had to deal with questions of race in their constructions of self.

## **Racial Issues**

The issues surrounding racial identification for Asians in Britain are complicated by lack of a sophisticated popular terminology for issues of race, and as I move into discussing this area of immigrant life, I want to explain the difference between "race" and "ethnicity." The terms are distinct, but have overlapping meanings. However, because the community that I am discussing is so well-defined, second-generation South Asian immigrants to Great Britain — as well as in the US — the terms can be used interchangeably, although the sources may treat them

---

58 British National Party, *Constitution of the British National Party*, 8th ed. (Hertfordshire: British National Party, 2004).

59 Sally Westwood, "Gendering Diaspora: Space, Politics, and South Asian Masculinities in Britain," in *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. Peter van der Veer, South Asia Seminar Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Nabeel Zuberi, "'The Last Truly British People You Will Ever Know': Skinhead, Pakis, and Morrissey," in *Hop on Pop: the Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*, ed. Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, Jane Shattuc (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

differently. In brief, ethnicity is defined by cultural practices and belonging, while race is generally predicated on phenotype.<sup>60</sup> Another way of formulating the division is to say one takes on an ethnic identity, but one is given a racial identity. Since the rhetoric in Britain revolved around race I will often use that term. However, when referring to ethnic enclaves, or ethnic practices, I am not signalling a different community, but using the terms “ethnicity” and “race” as synonyms.

From the earliest period of South Asian entry to Great Britain the term black is used to describe anyone who is not white.<sup>61</sup> The generic catchphrase had practical implications on group solidarity as witnessed by the willingness of Indians to be sent to Sierra Leone as part of a repatriation scheme in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The second wave of immigrants was part of the debate on the legal relationship between race and citizenship; a debate that continues throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Associating South Asians and blacks became standard rhetoric, and in many instances this association occurred in other Commonwealth countries as well.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Ethnic Community \*\*\*\*\***

In discussing how ethnic communities are formed, I draw heavily on research done on US immigrants. The terminology that is developed in the US is useful for describing similar phenomena in England, but I recognize that the exact mechanisms are not the same. I follow other authors who use the labels with similar caveats.<sup>63</sup> However, by using the same terms it is

---

60 A notable exception to the phenotypic basis of race is the “one drop” rule that exists in American racial discourse. Any individual who has one drop of black blood is considered black, regardless of physical appearance.

61 In earlier periods, both Jews and Irish were also considered “black.” This situation is similar to the one found in the US. See {Aspinall, 2002, #3718; Barrett and Roediger, 1997, #61; Brodtkin, 1998, #58; Ignatiev, 1996, #73}

62 Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 330.

63 Peter J. Aspinall, “Collective Terminology to Describe the Minority Ethnic Population: The Persistence of Confusion and Ambiguity in Usage,” *Sociology* 36, no. 4 (2002): 803-816; Mike Cole, “Ethnicity, ‘Status Groups’ and Racialization: A Contribution to a Debate on National Identity in Britain,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 5 (2003): 962-969; James Y. Nazroo and Saffron Karlsen, “Patterns of Identity Among Ethnic Minority People: Diversity and Commonality,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 5 (2003): 902-930; Martin O’Flaherty et al., “Home Visits: Transnationalism among Australian Migrants,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 5 (2007): 817-844; Hasmita Ramji, “British Indians ‘Returning Home’: An Exploration of Transnational Belongings,” *Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2006): 645-662.

easier to see connections across countries and I do not use them with the same rigor that a paper focusing on the sociology of immigrants would require.

The construction of barriers to the acceptance immigrants and their children into the mainstream of British society creates what is known as a racialized ethnicity, a conflation between race and ethnicity based on phenotype.<sup>64</sup> In response to this marginalization, the second-generation further distanced themselves from the mainstream by using ethnic markers to reify difference, a process called reactive ethnicity.<sup>65</sup> Racialized and reactive ethnicity can work synergistically to create a feedback mechanism that further inhibits assimilation. However, the same mechanism also promotes greater trans-ethnic ties with other marginal groups.<sup>66</sup> These ties operate not only intra-nationally, but internationally as well, so that not only are there ties between South Asians and blacks for example, but also South Asians in other countries. At the local level, this type of association is called “segmented assimilation.” Implicit in this type of assimilation is the recognition that the UK represents a diverse society in which immigrants can associate with ethnic groups other than the mainstream.<sup>67</sup>

For example, the opposing rhetoric of Enoch Powell and the Black Power Movement coincided to create a new sense of racial awareness in Asian immigrants.<sup>68</sup> The formation of a well-articulated racial consciousness was transmitted to the second-generation, and the elements that helped to create this consciousness – racism and militant identity politics – helped to structure the approach of the second-generation in expressing their own British-Asian identity.

## **The First Generation**

(Im)migrants draw on their cultural memory, and one part of that memory is the first-

---

64 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 2, 10.

65 Ibid., 10.

66 Ibid., 10, 13.; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*, 16.

67 Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530 (1993): 74-96.

68 Nabeel Zuberi, *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music*, Transnational Cultural Studies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 186.

generation of immigrants. These immigrants faced the same issues that the second-generation of immigrants now faces with respect to marginalization from the racial mainstream. Members of the first-generation also turned to poetry to express their alienation from British society, amongst many other topics. Joginder Shamsher, in his work on Panjabi poetry in Britain, says that while some members of the first-generation experimented with new poetic forms, such as beat poetry,<sup>69</sup> the majority continued to write poetry in a South Asian language integrating themes of immigrant exile and alienation. The lack of interaction with a broader community creates an obstacle to belonging to British society. The economic realities of immigrant life mean that these individuals remain at the margins. In addition, there is the external factor of racism that keeps these men — it is predominately men writing this poetry at this time — from embracing England as their own. Shamsher says, “[a] feature of this poetry is its sensitivity to racial discrimination and its indignant protest against it. Britain is seen as a centre of racial discrimination, felt at every level by everyone who is not white, whether he be Asian or Caribbean.”<sup>70</sup>

This sort of racialized ethnicity results in trans-ethnic identifications, and common cause is found with Britain’s blacks. This sort of bonding works intra-nationally and internationally, so we find many immigrant poets concerned with international affairs, often through a racial focus. Shamsher quotes a poem was written in an act of solidarity with blacks who were marginalized in “America, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia to challenge the power of the white racialists.”<sup>71</sup>

(Im)migrant artists seem to be recreating or sampling *qawwālī* rather than creating new texts. These artists are creating hybrid works and appear to be working with two distinct categories of material: Islamicate literary texts and musical systems. The texts are almost inviolate, but the musical systems they are married to are more flexible, and show a great deal more intercultural<sup>72</sup> interaction. One of the most prolific (im)migrant groups in the UK is

---

69 Joginder Shamsher and Ralph Russell, “Panjabi Poetry in Britain,” *New Community* VI, no. 3 (1978), 304.

70 Ibid., 301.

71 Ibid., 302.

72 Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New

Fun^Da^Mental (FDM), and through their long history they have experimented with several different sound systems. As a result, they showcase both the conservation of the text and the “diasporic interculture”<sup>73</sup> of their music.

## **Fun^Da^Mental (FDM)**

### **Biography**

Mark Slobin uses the term “diasporic interculuture” to refer to music that is composed of “linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries.”<sup>74</sup> His term is a useful shorthand to tie together both the idea of diasporic consciousness and the subculture, or imagined community, of South Asians attempting to resist their marginal racial status. In addition, it references the notion of cross-ethnic affiliation that we discussed earlier. This diasporic interculture is embodied by FDM’s members.

FDM is composed of two core individuals: Aki “Propa-Gandhi”<sup>75</sup> Nawaz (né Haq Nawaz Qureishi) and David “Impi-D” Watts, also known as DJ WattsRiot. There are other individuals who work with the group, such as Man Tharoo (Goldfinger), DJ Obeah, Bad-Sha Lallaman, Amir Ali, Count Dubulah, Inder Matharu, MC Mushtaq, and Hot Dog Dennis. Since Nawaz and Watts are the longest serving members of the band, and the ones who appear on the FDM website,<sup>76</sup> I will focus my attention on them.

Nawaz is of Panjabi descent, born near Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and emigrated to the UK in 1964.<sup>77</sup> He was part of a post-punk/goth band, Southern Death Cult, as a percussionist in the

---

England, 1993), 12, 64.

73 Ibid., 64.

74 Ibid.

75 Other printed variations include “Propa-Ghandi,” “PropaGhandi,” and “PropaGandhi.”

76 “Official Fun-Da-Mental Website.” (<http://www.fun-da-mental.co.uk/>).

77 Aki Nawaz shared this date with me via personal communication and indicated it was before he was 7 years of age. This age means that he is considered part of the 1.5 generation. The 1.5 generation are children who came to their host country prior to the age of 7. The criteria is used to indicate that these children are not true second-generation, but in terms of identification are more akin to the second-generation than the first -generation.

1980s before founding FDM in 1991. Watts was born in London, grew up in Canada, and is of Bajan descent. He joined the group in 1993 and remains an active member to this day. The multi-ethnic nature of the group reflects the reality of political and racial marginalization that creates inter-ethnic alliances. Nawaz, when asked if the combination of an Asian and a Black in the group was reflective of English reality, responded:

You know there are problems with the Asian and African communities, you know, culture and all that sort of thing, I think it all goes off into the different paths but on that issue I'd rather generalize; I think we have more in common than we don't have[,] so when I say about people being black who are like ... white people who are politically in a black situation.<sup>78</sup>

In his response, Nawaz recognized that cultural differences are important, but disenfranchisement is a powerful force that ties communities together. By marking "black" as a political category he also recognizes that race is only one factor contributing to unequal power relations. It is possible for someone who is phenotypically white to not be considered "white," and to find themselves in a politically "black" situation.

Islam is a core part of Nawaz' ideology and it is reflected in his music. Watts, who is not Muslim, believes that the issues about Islam that are addressed by the band reflect wider political concerns and various forms of oppression.<sup>79</sup> The band's first album, *Seize the Time* (1995), is perhaps the most "Islamic" that they have produced, using recitations from the Qur'an, devotional lines in Arabic, and addressing Islamophobia. However, it also deals with broader questions of oppression and South Asian identity.

### **Erotic Terrorism**

Unlike *Seize the Time*, very little has been written about FDM's later albums. On these albums there is a shift in language away from English and a change in musical styles to

---

78 Quoted in Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia: Negotiating Ethnicity on the UK Music Scene*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 165.

79 Ibid., 117.

electronica. I believe that because of these changes, the texts are harder to read. *Seize the Time*, is embedded in the specific situation of Asians in Britain. Although there are general connections made with South Asia on the track “Mother India,” and several mentions of a pan-Islamic identity, the vast majority of lyrics deal with British racism. *Erotic Terrorism* (1998) has no songs directly addressing anti-Asian sentiment in Great Britain. The liner notes of the album are simply the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). FDM is investing itself in broader struggle of oppressed people internationally while still keeping its primary interest in anti-racist activity in Britain.

The two songs on the album *Erotic Terrorism* that I will be examining are “One Ness (dhann a dhann)” and “Ja Sha Taan (Joo Ley Lal Mustt Qalander).” Both make reference to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, a heroic figure in Islamicate literatures. Habibeh Rahim has looked at ‘Alī as a hero in both medieval Persian and 20<sup>th</sup> century Urdu poetry.<sup>80</sup> In her analysis she establishes the positive reception of ‘Alī in various schools of Muslim thought and shows how he is used to represent the notion of *fatā*, or hero. She focuses on the famous Urdu poet and philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938), whom she believes represents a modernizing force on South Asian Islamicate literature, and his use of ‘Alī as symbol.<sup>81</sup> According to her, Iqbāl, who was influenced by the thought of Friederich Nietzsche, adapted the idea of the *übermensch* to apply to ‘Alī<sup>82</sup>. Iqbāl considered ‘Alī to be *insān-i kāmīl* (the perfect man)<sup>83</sup> and *mard-i khud-dār* (self-possessed man).<sup>84</sup> However, unlike Nietzsche’s idea, this perfection does not come by leaving God; it comes by fully realizing one’s relationship with God and becoming the perfect slave of God.<sup>85</sup> This conception of servitude (*bandagi* or *ibādah*) leads to a life of action.

---

80 Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested: ‘Alī B. Abi Talib’s Image in Classical Persian and Modern Indian Muslim Poetry” (PhD diss, Harvard University, 1989).

81 Ibid., 485.

82 Ibid., 487.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 486.

85 Ibid., 487.

According to Rahim, Iqbāl believed South Asians had become “politically and socio-culturally disoriented under British rule, [and encouraged them] not to indulge in laments and complaints, but to emulate ‘Alī and lead a life of positive action.”<sup>86</sup> Iqbāl’s impact on the popular culture of South Asia is quite profound. He is considered the national poet of Pakistan and he is the author of India’s unofficial national anthem *tarānah-i hindī* (Indian Anthem).<sup>87</sup> His use of the figure of ‘Alī serves to show both the impact ‘Alī has on the modern literary imagination and how he is used in a political setting. Using the activist voice that Iqbāl suggests makes it easier to understand how and why FDM is using *qawwālīs* that honor ‘Alī.

In “One Ness,” the *qawwālī* begins with the following lines in Panjabi:

دھن دھن بھاگ اس بندہ دہ

نام علی جہڑا لیندا ے

نام لیا ہر کم ہو جاوے

نام علی او نام علی

That person is fortunate

who takes the name of ‘Alī.

Taking his name, anything can be done.

The name of ‘Alī, the name of ‘Alī

The use of Panjabi is at one level an ethnically divisive language, and at another level helps to tie the (im)migrant community together. It is not a national language, like Hindi or Urdu, although it is a language of a state found in both India and Pakistan. Because of its close linguistic ties to

---

86 Ibid., 486.

87 The poem is actually written as a *ghazal*, and begins سارے جہاں سے اچھا بندوستان ہمارا اہم بللی ہیں اس کی یہ گلستان ہمارا (Our India is better than the [rest] of the world/We are its nightingales, this rose-garden of ours).

Hindustani, it is understandable to those who understand Hindustani<sup>88</sup> with very little effort. The majority of South Asians who immigrated to the UK were from Panjab, Pakistan, helping to establish *bhangra* as a dominant cultural expression of South Asians, regardless of point of origin and as a result, Panjabi became an identifiable language of South Asian-ness.<sup>89</sup> The use of Panjabi in *qawwālīs* is not unusual, but in this context it takes on the added resonance of community marker. The verse itself is clear that anything can be achieved by calling on ‘Alī. Using Iqbāl’s understanding of ‘Alī it is reasonable to suggest that FDM is attempting to call their listeners to action. By taking the name of ‘Alī, by looking at ‘Alī as a role-model, the (im)migrant community can take action. What that action is, and in what context, remains unclear at this point in the song.

The remaining verses in the song are in Hindustani, a common form of the national languages of Urdu and Hindi, serving as a unifying element in (im)migrant identity, as attested to by the consumption of Bollywood movies in diaspora communities.<sup>90</sup> The next verse is:

علی کے نام سن کہ میں آیا ہوں دور سے دور سے دور سے  
جھولی کو میری بھر دو محبت کے نور سے

I came from afar upon hearing ‘Alī’s name

Fill my being with the light of love

This lyric seems to function as a rallying cry for an activist agenda. The listener should come upon hearing the name of ‘Alī from wherever she is. When she arrives at her destination, her being should be filled with love. The love could be of the good actions that ‘Alī represents, or a self-reflective love of the Asian community in England. This latter idea, of a community that

---

88 I am reluctant to use Hindustani-speakers with respect to the (im)migrant community as the ability to understand a language does not equal the ability to speak that language, especially in second-generation communities.

89 Raminder Kaur and Virinder S. Kalra, “New Paths for South Asian Identity and Musical Creativity,” in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, ed. Sanjay Sharma et al. (London: Zed Books, 1996), 219.

90 See note 39.

loves itself, is further supported by a reading of the next verse:

کون ہے منکر

کون ہے مومن

نام علی کا لے کر دیکھو

یہ ہے منکر

وہ ہے مومن

دونوں کی پہچان علی ہے

Who is the disbeliever?

Who is the believer?

Take the name of ‘Alī and see.

This is the disbeliever,

that is the believer.

The difference between the two is ‘Alī

In this section ‘Alī is clearly being used as a divider between an “insider” group and an “outsider” group. The insider group knows ‘Alī. Specifically, they know that ‘Alī is a sign for a particular cultural expression, the *qawwālī*. Members of the outsider community may hear the music, and they may appreciate it, but they do not recognize ‘Alī; they do not recognize the culture as their own. However, the consumption of *qawwālī* by the outsider group functions as a bridge between the insider and outsider groups. Yuri Lotman makes a similar point when discussing the use of an obscure poem by the Russian author Pushkin. He says,

So Pushkin’s text split his readership into two groups: an extremely small group who could understand the text thanks to their detailed familiarity with extra-textual experiences shared with the author; and the great mass of readers who sense that

something is being alluded to, but cannot decipher what it is. But the readers grasp that the text is demanding an attitude of close friendship with the poet, and they *imagine* themselves to be in such a relationship with the poem. A secondary effect of the undeciphered allusion is to put *each* reader into the position of intimate friend of the author, one who possesses a special, unique, shared memory which enables him or her to explain the allusions.<sup>91</sup>

Arguably, the last verse shows FDM's particular interest in the intersection between Islamophobia and racism. This particular section shows FDM expressing their Muslim identity in addition to their Asian and Black identities. The words relate to a particular understanding of the birth of 'Alī and have referents that would only have Muslims as a potential audience. The lyrics are:

گر حسین کا باپ نہ ہوتا

کعبہ پر گز پاک نہ ہوتا

دنیا میں اسلام نہ ہوتا

سمجھو یہ احسان علی ہے

علی کو ہتھ<sup>92</sup> میں اتارا جو عین کعبہ میں

کھولی جو آنکھ تو پہلی خدا کے گھر<sup>93</sup> دیکھا

If the father of Ḥusayn had not been

The Ka'aba would never have been purified

There would have been no Islam in the world

---

91 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 67.

92 The standard spelling of hand is ہاتھ, but the vocalization is clearly short for metrical purposes.

93 A later repetition of the verse has خدا کا گھر, which seems to make more grammatical sense.

Understand this is the grace of ‘Alī

[God] placed ‘Alī by His hand like the ‘*ain* in the Ka‘bah

So that when ‘Alī opened his eyes the first thing he saw was the House of God.<sup>94</sup>

The traditional story is that ‘Alī, the father of Ḥusayn, was born in the Ka‘bah, a sacred space for Muslims across the world. ‘Alī’s elevated spiritual status is “proven” in this selection by God willing ‘Alī to be born in the holy area. The medial letter of the Ka‘bah is the letter ‘*ain* (ع), so God placed ‘Alī in the middle of the Ka‘bah like the ‘*ain*, using a strong visual pun that is tied intimately to the listener’s familiarity with the Urdu script and Arabic loan words. Muslim traditions state that the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī cleansed the Ka‘bah of idols in order to make it an appropriate locus of Muslim worship. This last verse adds another layer of identity to the composition and can be read as a declaration of FDM’s Muslim affinity.

The song “One Ness (dhann a dhann)” represents three levels of expressive identity. There is the Muslim character of FDM that is accessible through an understanding of the final verse of the song. There is a broader Asian identification that is represented by the *qawwālī* as a whole. By combining the traditional instruments of a *qawwālī* performance with contemporary synthetic sounds and electronic instruments, the material becomes more accessible to non-Asian Britons. The incorporation of new instrumentation helps to emphasize the strong beats of the music and allow them to be heard aloud. The music is more sound system friendly, including in portable sound systems found in cars, meaning that it can be consumed more easily and by wider audiences than before the aural enhancements.

The particular reading of this text as a way to define community, as a way to reach out to others, and as a political statement is supported by the vocal sample that ends the piece. Aki Nawaz reads the following piece that he wrote:

Changes? You think there have been a lot of changes? Na. The small amount of changes that have come, have come from the pure, stubborn love and sacrifice of many, many

---

94 The Ka‘aba is considered by Muslims as the House of God, built by Abraham and Ishmael.

black people. Just for the little bit of change you can still see racism, you can still see it in people's eyes. It just doesn't balance out, that amount of struggle for that amount of change doesn't make sense whatsoever. And I'm sure that people are just accommodating. Accommodating us, that's all it is. That isn't change. Accommodation is not change.

He clearly believes that racism is a concern in British society and that while many black people have sacrificed themselves to rid Britain of racism, it persists.<sup>95</sup> Implicit in the line "It just doesn't balance out, that amount of struggle for that amount of change doesn't make sense whatsoever" is a call to greater action. Societal change must happen quicker and at less of a cost to the victims — Britain's blacks. Accommodation of darker-skinned peoples, foreigners, immigrants, blacks, and various "others" is simply an expression of racist power structures in new forms. White society can decide that it no longer desires to be accommodating and return to overtly oppressing people of color. The term "acceptance" implies the same sort of power relationships, with whites being in a position to determine belonging. As a result, official rhetoric changes to be perceived as less assimilationist and more integrationist. However, the change in language does not alter that the official discussion is about an absolute definition of "Britishness." Although the particular period this album is embedded in deals with "acceptance," the general framework can be applied to later rhetorical changes as well.

The other song on the album that I wish to discuss is "Ja Sha Taan (Joo Ley Lal Mustt Qalander)" (JST), which shares some of the same characteristics as "One Ness," but also has additional material that allows one to see how FDM is invested in the process of making Asian space in Britain. The track begins with an uncredited sample from a blues song, and lyric is "I'm an evil man, don't you bother with me." Several people, most notably Sylviane Diouf, have speculated that blues music has some relationship to the sounds with which West African Muslim slaves were familiar.<sup>96</sup> The relationship between blues and certain slave musics is

---

95 It is possible that the "sacrifice" here refers to those who give up aspects of their culture to be accepted into the host society. However, the tone of the song and the sample seem to suggest a more revolutionary direction.

96 Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 196-198. See also Jonathan Curiel, "Muslim Roots of the Blues: The Music of Famous

current in African-American popular discourse,<sup>97</sup> so it is not unreasonable to assume that FDM is referencing this idea.

The sample itself is unadorned and sounds more like part of a rap song than an electronica one since it is repeated *in toto* only at the beginning and the end of the piece. Russell Potter argues that the selection of samples in hip-hop helps to establish a political vision,<sup>98</sup> but, unlike a clip of Malcolm X, this sample offers no direct political commentary. The selection makes more sense when combined with the other sample on the song:

Multi-culturalism is a divisive force. One can't uphold two sets of ethics, or be loyal to two nations, anymore than a man can have two masters. Youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history, is their history, is their history.<sup>99</sup>

Lord Norman Tebbit (b. 1931), the speaker of this particular selection, is a former leading member of Conservative Party in the UK. In this clip, Lord Tebbit says that those who do not conform to his understanding of British history are not truly British. He calls for an education system that tells only the British version of events, a troubling idea for people who come from former colonies and who fear the denigration and obfuscation of the savagery of the colonial enterprise. According to Lord Tebbit, in order to be truly British, immigrants must deny a part of their identity. He also holds that any ethical system other than the British system is in opposition to British ethics. His assumption is that anything not British like him will destroy Britain, and that everyone must adopt his understanding of Britishness. In light of these comments, the purpose of the other clip "I'm an evil man, don't you bother with me" becomes clear. FDM uses

---

American Blues Singers Reaches Back Through the South to the Culture of West Africa." (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/08/15/INGMC85SSK1.DTL>).; Fatima El Shibli, "Islam and the Blues," *Souls* 9, no. 2 (2007): 162-170.

97 Kathleen Malone O'Connor, "The Islamic Jesus: Messiahhood and Human Divinity in African American Muslim Exegesis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 3 (1998), 517; LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1999).

98 Russell A. Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism*, The SUNY Series in Postmodern Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 44.

99 See Michael White, "Hague Fury At Tory 'Dinosaurs': Leader's Debut Marred By Sniping." (<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/conservatives/story/0,451799,00.html>).

it as a statement of (im)migrant identity. (Im)migrants are part of two cultures and recognize other place(s) as having importance in their identities. British history is their history both as British subjects and because of the legacy of colonialism. They see history from the perspective of both the colonizer and the colonized. Because they have this split-vision, this double-consciousness,<sup>100</sup> one can argue that they are “evil” in Lord Tebbit’s world-view. This is the first connection between the two samples. The second part of the sample, “don’t you bother with me,” can be read in two ways. First, it is a declaration to leave the (im)migrant community alone. It has no intention of changing, so those who wish it to change should not expend the effort. Second, if Lord Tebbit, as a synecdoche for anti-immigration groups, believes the (im)migrant community to be problematic, why is he expending so much time and effort in defining it?

These samples frame the song JST, which seems to address these points of isolation and community building. The first verse refers to a well-known Sindhi holy man J<sup>h</sup>ūle Lāl whose hagiography holds that he was born in Sindh in the late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century, and is an *avatār* (incarnation, manifestation) of the Hindu God Vishnu.<sup>101</sup> Muslims honor him as a Sufi by the name of Zindah Pīr,<sup>102</sup> and he seems to have been conflated with a 13<sup>th</sup> century mystic Lāl Shahbāz Qalandar.<sup>103</sup> Shahbāz Qalandar’s shrine is also located in Sindh, on an important site of the Hindu God Shiva,<sup>104</sup> contributing to the conflation between the two “Lāl”s. Some authors<sup>105</sup>

---

100 W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” in *Writings*, ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 363-371.

101 Steven Wesley Ramey, “Defying Borders: Contemporary Sindhi Hindu Constructions of Practices and Identifications” (PhD diss, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), 218-219.

102 *Ibid.*, 222.

103 Michel Boivin, “Le Pèlerinage de Sehwan Sharif, Sindh (Pakistan): Territoires, Protagonistes et Rituels,” in *Les Pèlerinages au Maghreb et au Moyen-orient: Espaces Publics, Espaces Du Public*, ed. Sylvia Chiffolleau and Anna Madoeuf (Beyrouth: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2005), 323. “L’assimilation des deux figures s’exprime enfin par l’attribution d’un même surnom, celui de Jhule Lâl.”

104 *Ibid.*, 312.

105 SHEMEEM BURNEY ABBAS, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 26. She translates the line “Jhule Lālan” as “O thou of the cradle.” While correct insofar as J<sup>h</sup>ūle means “swing or cradle,” it seems to ignore “Lāl,” and therefore a potential reference to another figure.

and *qawwāls*<sup>106</sup> treat the two figures as one. However, by recognizing the figures as two different individuals, the song can speak to the broader questions of South Asian identity building. By using a figure conflating Hindu and Muslim heroes no religious tradition is removed from the sense of belonging.

The *qawwālī* itself is immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with the art form, and because of its fast beat, is a favorite in performance.

دم مست مست

جھولے لال قلندر

مست مست

### Call the intoxicated Qalandar J<sup>h</sup>ūle Lāl

In the verse he is described as a *qalandar*, a wandering mystic, unaffiliated with any Sufi *ṭarīqah* (order).<sup>107</sup> While not considered evil, *qalandars* are known for antinomian practices and living semi-solitary lives.<sup>108</sup> They are noted for their exceptional devotion and are often considered “saintly.”<sup>109</sup> The *qalandar* reverses the notion of an evil man, forcing a more nuanced understanding of what difference means. Superficial appearances would cast a *qalandar* to the margins. However, to do so would miss the value a *qalandar* could bring to society. Lord Tebbit’s remarks attempt to marginalize immigrants in England, thereby missing the potential

---

106 For example, on Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s album *Shahbaaz* (1991), there are two tracks “Shahbaaz Qalandar” and “Jewleh Lal,” indicating some sense of difference. However, the notes go on and state “Shahbaaz Qalandar and Jewleh Lal are both immensely popular traditional lyrics about the thirteenth century Sufi master Lal Shahbaaz Qalandar (the Red Falcon).” Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, “Shahbaaz.” Realworld Records, 1991, liner notes.

107 While not part of a formal structure, the *qalandars* did have a common approach to their mysticism. See J.T.P. De Bruijn, “The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sanā’ī Onwards,” in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 77-78; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 39-44.

108 J.T.P. De Bruijn, “The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sanā’ī Onwards,” 76; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*.

109 The technical term is *walī* (ولی), or friend, of God (*walī-e khudā* ولی خدا or *walī allah* ولی الله).

benefits they bring to England such as FDM's artistic and political contributions.

The third and fourth verses are in praise of 'Alī:

جنگل بحر سمندر کہتے حیدری علی علی

مشکل تو میری حل کرو مشکل کشا علی

علی علی علی علی علی علی دم

علی علی علی علی علی

The jungle, the oceans all say they are devotees of 'Alī.

'Alī 'Alī

Ease my difficulties, remover of difficulties 'Alī

Call 'Alī

We have already seen how 'Alī is used as a call to action. In this particular lyric, “the jungles, the oceans all say they are devotees of 'Alī,” there is a move away from limiting access to 'Alī to Asian only. The phrase “the jungles, the oceans” is meant to represent all of creation, so anyone can participate in the action represented by 'Alī. In the same way, FDM is attempting to reach out to anyone, Asian or not, to make space for Asians in English society.

### **There Shall Be Love!**

The album *There Shall Be Love! (TSBL)* (2001) shows a different direction in the growth of FDMs politics. Whereas *Erotic Terrorism* expands FDM's thinking to questions of human rights and broadening who it included in its coalition, *TSBL* forms international alliances, including Tuvan throat singers Huun Huur Tu and South African musicians Zamo Mbuto and Comrades. FDM is also working with new South Asian sounds, including Bāul music with Bapi Das Baul.<sup>110</sup> The international, trans-ethnic coalition building of FDM reflects both its

---

110 The Bāuls are an Islamicate mystical group based in Bengal in eastern India and in Bangladesh. Their music is functionally similar to *qawwālī*, although stylistically different. Like *qawwālī*, the music of the Bāuls

commitment to putting its politics of radical equality into practice and the understanding of oppressed peoples having certain common interests. While there are several songs with a South Asian influence, only two, “Polution,” and “The Last Gospel,” include *qawwālī* elements.

FDM performs both tracks with the Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali group, which has as members two nephews of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. “The Last Gospel,” opens with a sample of Mahalia Jackson (1911-1962), a well-known US gospel singer, performing the gospel “Amazing Grace.” The gospel itself is tied to the anti-slavery movement in England, and eventually became important to the African-American and Native American communities. Both the song and singer are recognizable, even though only the first line, “amazing grace, how sweet the sound,” is sampled. The sound immediately conjures notions of suffering, longing, and liberation. When asked about the use of gospel with *qawwālī*, Aki Nawaz responded:

Well, musically it’s a very limited idea but it’s to draw attention to the connection between gospel music and qawwali music. And then you can go into deeper, into what they’re singing about. A lot of these quwwalis [sic] and gospels are based on the same things,<sup>111</sup> the people that we forget that were the real heroes. Prophets and saints who had power in their hands to have big palaces and to dwell in that world of luxury, but they didn’t. And to me they’re the real heroes. They didn’t become hypocrites and contradict what their whole substance was about. Jesus was great resistance fighter.<sup>112</sup>

For Nawaz, the use of gospel and *qawwālī* refers to a spiritual commonality of their heroes. In addition, these heroes were also resistance fighters who were presumably fighting for a better world. Nawaz is attempting to create ways for non-Asians to interact with, and relate to, the music. By using “Amazing Grace,” he references a recognizable American musical idiom, a recognizable American singer, and a song that is tied to American identity, but which has its

---

crosses religious and ethnic lines. For more information on the Bāuls and their music, see Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

111 This comment brings to mind a *qawwālī* album by Mehar and Sher Ali, *Qawwali Jam: Islamic Gospel* (1997).

112 dimm summer, “exclusive interview with Aki Nawaz & Dave Watts of Fun^Da^Mental.” ([http://www.ethnotechno.com/int/int\\_aki-dave\\_6.01.02.php](http://www.ethnotechno.com/int/int_aki-dave_6.01.02.php)).

origin in Great Britain. He uses that song to bridge a gap between “Christian,” and “Muslim” identities by putting two sets of devotional music next to each other. The *qawwālī* portion of the song is another text in praise of ‘Alī, mixing both Urdu and Panjabi lyrics.

The words are similar to earlier songs by FDM that reference ‘Alī. However, there is one line that is slightly different:

رب دا اے شیر سوہنا میرا پیر علی

[Panjabi] My *pīr*<sup>113</sup> ‘Alī is the beloved lion of God

Here, the word *pīr* is used to indicate a person of great spiritual standing. Since Nawaz sees the saints as heroes of the faith, he is clearly putting ‘Alī into that category. ‘Alī then represents a fighter for a better world, and his chivalry was discussed earlier. The Persian epithet *sher* is used to denote that ‘Alī is a lion of God. This name is derived from the Arabic name *Ḥaydar*, given to him by his mother, and the Arabic *asad*, which were used to denote his martial and spiritual virtues.<sup>114</sup> The use of the word *sher* so close to *pīr* allows Nawaz to use ‘Alī as a role-model of both piety and action.

Nawaz has stated publicly that he considers his work to be about being human. In an interview he states “First and foremost you consider yourself as a human being, you know, that’s it. Everything else is like little categories, everything else is a debate and an issue and I think that is part of the confusion. It’s very, very confusing, it’s like how you deal with it.”<sup>115</sup> FDM has taken a stance that attempts to collapse categories that divide people and seeks a vision of radical equality. However, that does not mean that they exist outside of a community. In the case of Nawaz, he is conscious of his Muslim, Asian, and Black identifications, and uses all of them to build community and coalitions. Just as FDM pulls on Asian lyrical traditions and non-Asian musical forms to create community, so too does the The Dub Factory.

---

113 Literally an old man, but here meaning spiritual master, guide, or teacher.

114 Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested,” 216.

115 Quoted in Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia*, 165.

## **The Dub Factory**

### **Biography**

The Dub Factory (DF) is one man, M. Parvez.<sup>116</sup> He says that “as an Asian living in a multi-cultural area of Leicester I had a variety of influences as a youth. Reggae was the main music at that time. The big basslines echoed off the walls day and night and just became part of my life.”<sup>117</sup> He appears on Bally Sagoo’s record label, ISHQ [love] Records. According to Gayatri Gopinath, Sagoo should be credited with helping to move India and the UK into a “sonic diaspora, so that it [the nation] no longer provided the anchor for notions of diasporic return, authenticity, and purity.”<sup>118</sup> Parvez seems to continue the tradition of moving beyond notions of authenticity and purity with his album entitled *Revolution: Qawali meets Roots Reggae* (2000).

### **Revolution**

The title of the album declares its intent and its origins. It is a combination of *qawwālī* — including material in the *ghazal* tradition — and reggae music. The album contains several *ghazals*, but I have chosen to focus on the only *qawwālī* “Ali Ali.” For Parvez, the revolution is one of unity, love, and peace. It is an idyllic, almost utopian vision in which his music brings everyone together.<sup>119</sup> Such an understanding of the music would seem to lend credence to the fear that musical hybridity erases racial specificity and racial struggle.<sup>120</sup>

DF uses both forms of reggae, roots and dancehall, to create a music that is both culturally specific to Asians in the UK and part of a transnational network. Parvez draws on the religious component of roots to integrate Islamicate literatures, making the work distinctively

---

116 He provides no first name.

117 “ISHQ Records The Dub Factory.” (<http://www.ishqrecords.com/dubfacBiog.htm>).

118 Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, Perverse Modernities (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 41.

119 The Dub Factory, “Revolution: Qawali meets Roots Reggae.” Ishq Records, 2000, liner notes.

120 Koushik Banerjea, “Sounds of Whose Underground?: The Fine Tuning of Diaspora in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Theory Culture & Society* 17, no. 3 (2000), 75.

Asian, while the use of reggae reflects his upbringing in Britain. He brings in an Indian musician to supplement his own electronic constructions, creating transnational linkages between India and the UK. The resulting sound is not roots, nor dancehall, nor *qawwālī*, but a combination of all these sounds for something unique. It is this *mélange* that creates a unity, not in the absence of race, but because of race. Reggae consciousness reflects marginal identities, and Parvez is attempting to show how to move beyond those identities, as demonstrated by the title “Revolution.”

One of the key images in reggae is that of the lion<sup>121</sup> that represents the animal role model who conquers his enemies.<sup>122</sup> We have seen how the epithet of lion was applied to ‘Alī, so the use of *qawwālī* in praise of ‘Alī’s prowess seems a natural extension of both reggae and *qawwālī* traditions. The album’s second track, and only *qawwālī*, is “Ali Ali.” It begins with telling of ‘Alī’s strength in the battlefield of Khaybar:

علی مولا علی

کبھی دیوار مٹی ہے کبھی در کانپ جاتا ہے

علی کا نام سون کے ابھی خیر کانپ جاتا ہے

‘Alī Mowlā<sup>123</sup> ‘Alī

Still the walls shake, still the doors quake

Upon hearing the name of ‘Alī, even now Khaybar<sup>124</sup> quakes.

The story of Khaybar, now part of popular folklore, describes how ‘Alī was called by the Prophet

---

121 Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 24.

122 Peter Lamarche Manuel et al., *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music From Rumba to Reggae*, Revised and expanded ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 195.

123 Lord or master.

124 Khaybar is the location of a fort that the Prophet Muhammad could not conquer without the aid of ‘Alī. The story demonstrates the heroic and chivalric qualities of ‘Alī. See Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested,” 195-196.

Muḥammad to tear the door off a fort that Muḥammad's army had unsuccessfully besieged.<sup>125</sup> This verse references the event of 'Alī tearing off the door (در کانپ جاتا ہے) and places it in the context of the power of aurality (upon hearing the name of 'Alī - علی کا نام سون کے). Parvez is linking together aspects of his Asian and Black British identifications through the use of sonic tools. Much like FDM, he is using language to create a system that is only fully open to those who are immersed in Asian cultures. Great Britain is one of the few places where the combination of reggae and *qawwālī* can be produced by someone embedded in both cultures. It is this merging of sounds that is British, so arguably the absence of the English language is what allows the piece to define what it means to belong in Britain. The song demonstrates a freedom from external definitions of English, as well as the internalization of that definition. The multiple identities of Asians are mediated into a cohesive whole that moves beyond what W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) called “double-consciousness” in the American context. Double-consciousness is a “sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others,”<sup>126</sup> so by excising the sounds of Britain from his work, Parvez is defining a new conception of Britishness that is not defined by a relationship to whiteness.<sup>127</sup>

Through the use of sounds, both in their presence and their absence, The Dub Factory is creating a new soundscape for Britain.<sup>128</sup> They appears on a compilation that has as its tagline “acknowledging history, addressing the present, and constantly looking to the future.”<sup>129</sup> This quote seems to address many of the points discussed so far: the past inflects the present, which contributes to the future of (im)migrants in their host societies. Appearing on that same compilation is the group Asian Dub Foundation (ADF).

## **Conclusion**

---

125 Ibid., 195.

126 W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” 365.

127 cf. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1982).

128 See Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia*, 147.

129 Various Artists, “Indestructible Asian Beats: Urban Tigers from the Concrete Jungle.” Musicrama, 2001, liner notes.

Although the figure of ‘Alī is important to Sufi and Shi‘ah theological thought, he is also an important historical and cultural figure as well. The incorporation of reverence for ‘Alī into a popular art form like *qawwālī* means that his stories, history, sayings, and examples are integrated into non-Muslim cultures. As *qawwālī* moves from being a Sufi devotional to an Islamicate literature, the political component becomes more evident. ‘Alī, the symbolic warrior, becomes a role model for (im)migrants attempting to create a home for themselves. Their diaspora consciousness encourages the creation of political and cultural alliances in their host society. These alliances are expressed through contemporary hybridization of *qawwālī* with musics like reggae and electronica and lyrics from gospel and blues’ songs. These hybrid creations emphasize a new vision of Britain that incorporates a South Asian presence as active participants in society. One of the strongest points indicating a sense of continuity in the *qawwālī* is the figure of ‘Alī, who represents political engagement and activism for this community.

Article

*Qawwālī* and Home: ‘Alī in (Im)migrant Identity

Fonts: GentiumAlt, Gentium Book Basic, X Prototype 10

Word Count: 12,545 (including notes)

Hussein Rashid

401 East 80th Street

#4G

New York, NY 10075

USA

v1: April 30, 2009

v2: June 19, 2009

## **Abstract**

Although ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (600-661 CE) is generally treated as an important political figure in Islamic history and as an important theological figure amongst Ṣūfī and Shī‘ah groups, he also plays an important cultural role. In South Asia, the *qawwālī* is an important part of the Chishtī *samā‘*, or spiritual concert. Since the Chishtiyya trace their spiritual lineage through ‘Alī, many of the lyrics focus on his chivalry and heroism. As the *qawwālī* becomes an important cultural art form, crossing religious boundaries, the figure of ‘Alī is interpreted in new contexts. South Asians in diaspora use him to discuss issues of belonging in a new host society. These diasporic artists create new hybrid art forms to reflect unequal power relationships and draw on rich lyrical and musical traditions of social protest. Specifically, groups like Fun^Da^Mental and The Dub Factory are integrating *qawwālī*, hip-hop, reggae, rock, and electronica to alter the soundscape of the UK.

## **Biography**

Hussein Rashid is finishing his PhD in Indo-Muslim Cultures, part of Harvard University’s Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. His dissertation, “A Handful of Dust: Reading South Asian (Im)migrant Identity in Islamicate Literatures,” focuses on the transformation of *ghazal* and *qawwālī* literatures in immigrant communities in the US and UK. He is currently a Special Visiting Instructor in the Department of Religion at Hofstra University and Associate Editor at Religion Dispatches (<http://www.religiondispatches.org/>).

## **Qawwālī and Home: 'Alī in (Im)migrant Identity**

### **Introduction**

*Qawwālī* is an Islamicate music form particular to South Asia and found in communities of the South Asian diaspora. Many lyrics of the genre relate to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (600-661 CE), considered by many Sufi orders to be the successor to the spiritual authority of Prophet Muḥammad (570-632 CE). 'Alī's role as warrior, both in physical and spiritual terms, is an important part of his hagiography and is celebrated in many *qawwālī*. The centrality of 'Alī persists as an integral part of the tradition, although the form has changed over time and adapted to new environments as it moves with immigrant communities. In diaspora communities the style and instrumentation of the *qawwālī* changes to reflect new cultural sensibilities and the lyrical tradition is interpreted in different ways. For diasporics, the figure of 'Alī takes on a particular significance, not as a spiritual master, but as a model for justice and resistance against oppression. In Britain, musicians of South Asian descent are actively using the *qawwālī* and the figure of 'Alī to address issues of racial marginalization.

### **Qawwālī**

As an art form, *qawwālī* is part of the *samā'*, or spiritual concert, of the Chishtī Sufi Order, and is particular to South Asia. The term is first introduced in an 11<sup>th</sup> century text *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, although it is not until the time of Amīr Khusraw (1244-1325) that the term is used in the way we understand it today to refer to a type of performance of a lyrical text.<sup>130</sup> Peter Manuel discusses the place of Muslim devotional literature and its performative aspect: “Muslim devotional music has constituted a significant part of North Indian musical culture since the thirteenth century, if not earlier. While the Chishti and Naqshabandi Sufi orders embraced music as a means to attaining mystical annihilation, Indo-Muslim dynasts, with a very few exceptions, ardently patronized court music and dance.”<sup>131</sup> The Sufi orders mentioned above are two that incorporated music into their ritual practice, known as *samā'*, literally meaning “listening.” Poems set to music are considered an important part of spiritual advancement, and the *qawwālī* is

---

130 Alison Arnold, *South Asia: The Indian Subcontinent*, vol. 5, Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (New York: Garland, 2000), 751-752.

131 Peter Lamarche Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 123.

the favored form of the Chishtī order.<sup>132</sup>

Regula Qureshi describes the *qawwālī* as consisting of:

a large body of poems, with tunes for singing and metric patterns for drumming, usually on the barrel-shaped *dholak*. These poems are sung by a group of *qawwāls* led by one or two solo singers and supported melodically by the portable harmonium that has superseded the indigenous *sarangi* or *sitar*. Handclapping by the singers intensifies the rhythmic accentuation. Ensemble structure and performing style make possible extended singing, a strongly articulated musical meter, and a flexible structuring process adapted to the changing spiritual needs of the *samā*' listeners.<sup>133</sup>

However, she is also careful to note that the text remains of paramount importance to the Sufi practitioners, and the music is used only to intensify the meanings of the words, not overshadow them.<sup>134</sup> The confluence of Muslim and Indic cultural languages<sup>135</sup> establishes the *qawwālī* as an "Islamicate" literature. Marshal Hodgson defines "Islamicate" as "not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims."<sup>136</sup> In other words, it has its origins amongst Muslims, but is part of a larger cultural context that allows non-Muslims to participate in and contribute to it. This diversity is demonstrated by incorporation of Islamicate literatures in forms such as Bollywood films.<sup>137</sup>

This performance of the text pulls on the "associational and connotational power" of the

---

132 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition," in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, ed. Stephen Blum et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 109.

133 Ibid., 107. See also Peter Lamarche Manuel, *Cassette Culture*, 123.

134 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, "Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition," 109.

135 Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 3-4.

136 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Classical Age of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 59.

137 Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State*, ed. Zoya Hasan and Kali for Women (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994); Raza Mir, "'Voh Yar Hai jo Khusbu ki Tarah / Jis ki Zuban Urdu ki Tarah': The Friendly Association Between Urdu Poetry and Hindi Film Music," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 15 (2000): 315-321.

rich poetic idiom that attempts to convey a great deal of meaning in the fewest possible words.<sup>138</sup> This compactness of language means that the poetic form of the *ghazal* is found in the overwhelming majority of *qawwālīs*,<sup>139</sup> but it is not the only type of poetry that makes up this literary genre. The text can also be composed of quatrains, couplets, or single-lines from poetic forms other than the *ghazal*.<sup>140</sup> In addition, *bayts*, couplets, from multiple *ghazals* can be incorporated, regardless of language, in order to deliver a thematic message. The use of short phrases from larger poetic pieces, or by using short poems, is part of the use of a common pool of symbols and poetry that evoke larger ideas and stories. The performative nature of the *qawwālī* means that while there is a base sequence of types of verses, the actual order of the verses is never fixed.<sup>141</sup> Because of the musical and interactive part of the performance, the text is never presented the same way twice, allowing for a near infinite use of the same material.<sup>142</sup>

The *qawwālī* uses multiple languages in the same text, has a denseness of meaning that allows for multiple interpretations, and also evokes broader concepts due to the intertextual nature of the material. Like any cultural production, as Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence note, it changes in “response to the political, ideological, and technological transformations of the contemporary world.”<sup>143</sup> As a result, although conceived as a devotional text, the *qawwālī* quickly takes on political overtones, speaking for justice and against oppression.<sup>144</sup> In the modern period, many *qawwāls*, considered “traditional” stylists, use their performances to critique oppressive state structures.<sup>145</sup>

---

138 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 83.

139 Ibid., 86.

140 Ibid., 66-69.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid., 4.

143 Bruce B. Lawrence and Carl W. Ernst, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1.

144 Qamar-ul Huda, “Introduction,” *The Muslim World* 97, no. 4 (2007), 544.

145 SHEMEEM BURNEY ABBAS, “Risky Knowledge in Risky Times: Political Discourses of *Qawwālī* and *Sūfīana-kalam* in Pakistan-Indian Sufism,” *The Muslim World* 97, no. 4 (2007), 629-630.

## Diaspora

The richness of meaning of *qawwālī* literature, its penetration in as a cultural form amongst South Asians, and its adaptability position it as a good literature for diaspora communities to utilize in creating a sense of home for themselves. I use the term “(im)migrants” to define members of a second-generation or later<sup>146</sup> cohort who are no longer immigrants, but who are not wholly accepted in their host societies. This in-between, or liminal, state is a function of the unequal power relationships between (im)migrants and the host society, and is also the impetus for the creation of their hybrid works. I believe the term “(im)migrants” captures the unsettled nature of these individuals and the sense that they are still in motion in search of a home.<sup>147</sup>

The idea of home is distinct from the idea of a homeland. The homeland is a physical space where immigrants may wish to return to, a tendency often found in first-generation immigrants and described as “the myth of return,”<sup>148</sup> or *heimkehrillusion* (lit. “the illusion of returning home”).<sup>149</sup> (Im)migrants do not have this same desire to return to the homeland of their forebears because, as William Safran articulates, “Although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially.”<sup>150</sup> Therefore the homing impulse has to be seen as a cultural desire, not a geographic one. The children of immigrants are not part of the host society’s mainstream, or “white,” culture. “White”

---

146 For simplicity’s sake I will simply use the term “second-generation” to refer to second and later generations.

147 I am careful not to use Homi Bhabha’s idea of the “unhomely,” as he focuses more on the idea of the rupture between private and public. However, at several points he does approach what I am attempting to describe. For example, he says the “private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy,” (p. 13) and quoting Freud’s idea of the *unheimlich* “the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light” (p. 10). See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 9-18.

148 Badr Dahya, “Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers?,” *Race & Class* 14, no. 3 (1973), 247.; Katy Gardner, “Desh-Bidsh: Sylheti Images of Home and Away,” *Man* 28, no. 1 (1993), 14.; Raj Mehta and Russell W. Belk, “Artifacts, Identity, and Transition: Favorite Possessions of Indians and Indian Immigrants to the United States,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 17, no. 4 (1991), 402. See also Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

149 William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991), 86.

150 *Ibid.*, 91.

in this instance is not an ethnic or racial category, but a marker of the dominant culture.<sup>151</sup> This lack of full acceptance is indicated by the use of hyphenated identities,<sup>152</sup> such as South Asian-American or British-Asian.<sup>153</sup> Hyphenated identity is explained as having three possible causes: symbolic ethnicity, segmented assimilation, and racialized ethnicity.<sup>154</sup> Each of these causes also results in different uses of the hyphen and indicates different levels of agency in the distance the group experiences from the mainstream. However, since these causes are not mutually exclusive, the resulting expressions of identity have a great deal of overlap, and I treat them as an undifferentiated whole for the sake of my argument. The awareness of subjugation creates linkages intra-nationally amongst other subjugated groups and internationally amongst co-ethnics.<sup>155</sup> The presence of South Asians around the world, and the awareness of extended families in various countries,<sup>156</sup> allows (im)migrants to be part of a larger transnational grouping.<sup>157</sup> This transnational cultural association is a component of the idea of diaspora.

Diaspora, as an analytic term, has a multitude of meanings,<sup>158</sup> and I wish to clarify my usage before proceeding. One way to think about diaspora is to differentiate between a physical

---

151 The use of the term “white,” has a long pedigree in Sociology, and as a short-hand is less fraught with problems than “American,” or “British.” Inherent in the term is a sense of dynamic relations of power that change over time and place.

152 Hyphenated identities come into vogue in the 1960s and 1970s in the US and the UK as a means of resisting racial marginalization, and draws heavily on the language and thought of the Black Power Movement of the time. See Wannu Wiburwasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee, “Asian American Displacements,” in *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*, ed. Wannu Wiburwasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 7; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 43.

153 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity: Second-Generation South Asian Americans Traverse a Transnational World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 2.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid., 10, 13.; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American: Indian Immigrants and the Cultures of Citizenship* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 16.

156 Wannu Wiburwasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee, “Asian American Displacements,” 5; Dhooleka Sarhadi Raj, *Where Are You From?: Middle-Class Migrants in the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 175.

157 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 19-20; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*, 125.

158 André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “On Homelands and Diasporas: An Introduction,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

diaspora and the idea of “diaspora as metaphor.”<sup>159</sup> Physical diasporas<sup>160</sup> can be further divided into types such as classical, victims, labor, trade, and imperial.<sup>161</sup> The physical diaspora of South Asians is composed of several of these types, most notably the labor diaspora, which is defined as the movement of members of an ethnic group for economic reasons and who maintain a distinct ethnic identity in their host society.<sup>162</sup> Robert Cohen, a typologist of diasporas, also discusses the idea of cultural diaspora, which is akin to the idea of diaspora as a metaphor. He believes that cultural diasporas can exist independently of physical diasporas. According to André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “Diaspora as metaphor... [is] a way to emphasize the powerful ... relationships between minorities living in several different countries.”<sup>163</sup> One reason for rejecting assimilation is that immigrants are alienated from their host societies and are constructed as racialized others.

Various physical diasporas resulted in the migration of South Asians around the world. The children of these diasporics are now part of a cultural diaspora, who are not interested in being associated with a homeland but with a home.<sup>164</sup> Several sociologists have questioned whether the term diaspora can be applied to second-generation South Asians, preferring the term transnational community instead.<sup>165</sup> However, I believe such a critique relies only on the idea of a physical diaspora, and that the idea of a cultural diaspora encompasses the idea of transnational communities. On the other side of the argument are those who argue that the idea of diaspora is about creating cultural isolation,<sup>166</sup> but I believe such an argument glosses over the sociologic

---

159 Ibid., 7.

160 For definitions of this type of diaspora, see Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 23, 26.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid., 57.

163 André Levy and Alex Weingrod, “On Homelands and Diasporas: An Introduction,” 17.

164 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 180.

165 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 172-173; Dhooleka Sarhadi Raj, *Where Are You From?*, 168.

166 Jonathan Friedman, “Diasporization, Globalization, and Cosmopolitan Discourse,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 145.

concerns of minority communities. The “diasporic community”<sup>167</sup> is not about the minority remaining the minority, but about fighting marginalization and redefining the mainstream.<sup>168</sup> The concept of the South Asian cultural diaspora closely mirrors Paul Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic:<sup>169</sup> a cultural system that is not specific to a nation, but that is localized to national concerns. The idea of hybridity is predicated on the unequal power relationships needed for the formation of a diasporic consciousness. In addition, hybrid creations aid in giving a local identification to the diasporic community.

### **Hybridity**

Mikhail Bakhtin argues that, “at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom.”<sup>170</sup> According to Graham Allen, heteroglossia is “the recognition of the numerous different ‘languages’, of social and professional groups, of classes and literary movements, operating in society at any one time.”<sup>171</sup> Thus the heteroglot language deals with the tensions between the past and present use of language, for example the ways language was used in different periods of the past compared to the way different groups use language in the present.

The idea of heteroglossia implies the meeting of “languages,” and this meeting gives rise to the idea of the hybrid. Bakhtin defines hybrid as when “two ‘languages’ ... come together and to a certain extent are crossed with each other.”<sup>172</sup> The meeting between languages is not necessarily a meeting of equals as each language occupies a different space in cultural power structures. Heteroglossia leads to a clash of languages, which exist in a dialogic state. Therefore, it is only through heteroglossia that new meanings can enter into a language.<sup>173</sup> Saussure argues

---

167 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 183.

168 *Ibid.*, 210.

169 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

170 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series; No. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 291.

171 Graham Allen, *Intertextuality, The New Critical Idiom* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 29-30. See also M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 263, 272-273, 275.

172 *Ibid.*, 75.

173 *Ibid.*, 61.

that the dominant language will incorporate the weaker language and become composite without losing its character.<sup>174</sup> Bakhtin's vision acknowledges that both languages change by interacting with one another, and the clash does not necessarily lead to incorporation and loss of the weaker language by the stronger one. In instances when it does, the new composite language enters into a new heteroglot relationship with a different language because of the way its speakers interact with each other and other speakers of language.

By giving speakers a more active role in changing the language Bakhtin allows for us to envision two types of hybridity: organic and intentional. The organic hybrid is the natural construction of hybrid that emerges from heteroglossia. The origin and development of the Urdu language represents an organic hybrid. Urdu is the result of the long interaction amongst Turkish-influenced Arabicized Persian, Sanskrit, Braj B<sup>h</sup>āṣā, and K<sup>h</sup>aṛī Bolī to produce first *rekhtā* (mixed [language]) and finally *Urdū-e muḍallā*, literally “the exalted camp.”<sup>175</sup> The intentional hybrid is a subversive construction that allows a safe way to criticize current power relationships and acts of the primary power, whether political, social, economic or cultural.<sup>176</sup> I will focus more on intentional hybrids.

Bakhtin's interest in language and hybridity focused on the novel and he did not believe that much of his theory applied to the epic poetry with which he was familiar. However, Jahan Ramazani has argued that Bakhtin's theory is applicable to postcolonial poetry because of the mixed nature of the languages and forms.<sup>177</sup> Nargis Virani has also argued for the applicability of the model to the poetry of the Persian poet Jalāl ud-Dīn Rūmī.<sup>178</sup> Looking at *qawwālī* traditions,

---

174 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986), 194.

175 Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell, *Hindi and Urdu since 1800: A Common Reader* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1990), 1-5.

176 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 75.

177 Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 17.

178 Nargis Virani, ““I am the Nightingale of the Merciful” Macaronic or Upside-Down?: The Mulamma'at of Jalal al-Din Rumi” (PhD diss, Harvard, 1999), 44-50. Although focused specifically on Rūmī, the idea of the macaronic, or heteroglot, verse, is applicable to a large part of Islamic literature. At the very least, the association of Arabic with Islam means that wherever Muslims go, Arabic goes with them. This movement of language establishes the basis for hybrid constructions.

the relevance of Bakhtin's thought seems obvious: it draws on multiple languages, the merging of different poetic traditions, and when combined with music, the placement of two different language systems together. The hybrid creation I am focusing on is the literary forms of *qawwālī*. This creation is being used to express (im)migrant identity and to make space in mainstream discourse for the inclusion of these (im)migrants. The various cultures that (im)migrants utilize in their creations are in constant communication with one another, adapting and changing due to their interactions. The ultimate goal is to create a change in the dominant culture that accepts (im)migrants as part of that culture; to create what Alba and Nee term a "composite culture."<sup>179</sup>

### **Inglīstān**<sup>180</sup>

The specific case-study I wish to investigate is the South Asian diaspora community in Great Britain. This community is racially marginalized, relatively well-defined, and is conscious of an Asian identity. Artists use *qawwālī* to express their sense of belonging, and pull on the figure of 'Alī to indicate their involvement in their communities. In order to discuss the current sociological concerns of the second-generation, I would like to review the history of Asian immigration to Great Britain and the impact the long history of this immigration has had on British perceptions of Asians, particularly with regard to race. With an historical context, it becomes easier to analyze particular forces, especially that of race, that serve to marginalize Asian communities. One of the results of such marginalization is the creation of community identity that is almost oppositional in its nature to mainstream British society, but at the same time actively engaged with that society. As with any multi-ethnic society, mapping universal patterns of group interaction is impossible. The following history attempts to describe general trends, particularly in response to rhetoric from politicians, who are perceived as voices of authority. Since the argument is based on cross-cultural exchange amongst minority groups, points of tension amongst these groups are not discussed. In addition, class politics offer another avenue of group solidarity where the discussion of race is either radically transformed or

---

179 Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10.

180 The Urdu "Inglīstān" translates as "England." However, it is broadly understood to mean both Great Britain and the United Kingdom. In the following analysis, the term Britain is used to mean Great Britain and excludes Northern Ireland.

altogether ignored. The South Asian response to British racial marginalization is simply one vector through which we can understand ethnic constructions.

As England was the seat of empire, South Asian immigration has been nearly continuous since the formation of the East India Trading Company in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, we can identify three distinct waves of immigration – here the wave metaphor is apt as it allows us to envision a continuity marked by peaks and troughs, rather than strongly demarcated periods. The three waves roughly correspond to the early colonial period, the late colonial period, and the post-colonial period.<sup>181</sup> The waves, and approximate dates for each, are outlined in the table below:

<i>Wave</i>	<i>Time Period</i>
Early Colonial Period - East India Company	1600-1857
Late Colonial Period - Early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century <sup>182</sup>	1857-1962
Post-Colonial Period - Late 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	1962-Present

**Figure 1: Periods of South Asian Immigration to the UK**

The latest wave in immigration to the UK from South Asia, and the largest so far, began in the 1960s. The key factor in the increase in immigration was the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, which made it easier for citizens of Commonwealth nations to migrate to the UK. Two other international events helped increase the number of Asians<sup>183</sup> settling in Britain. One event was the construction of the Mangla Dam in Mirpur (in present-day Pakistan), which displaced over 100,000 people. Some of these people resettled in

---

181 I am consciously using “post-colonial” to indicate a temporal relationship, rather than “postcolonial,” which I use with respect to models from literary theory.

182 India and Pakistan gained independence from the UK in 1947. However, immigration law in the UK did not change until 1962, hence the 15 year overlap from 1947-1962 in what I’m calling the “Late Colonial Period.”

183 Starting in the 1980s, South Asians also adopt the label “Asians” for themselves.

Panjab, but significant numbers came to Great Britain. The other event is the mass migration of Asians out of East Africa, double-migrants, who fled Africanization policies that disenfranchised them.

Immigrants who did come to Britain as individuals during this wave were, like their predecessors, mostly male. Unlike the previous peaks in immigration, these men could sponsor their families, allowing for the creation of self-sustaining ethnic enclaves. Both the increase in immigration and the formation of ethnic enclaves caused a backlash. An anti-immigrant campaign headed by a Member of Parliament (MP), Enoch Powell, resulted in the passage of two laws: The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968 and the Immigration Act of 1971.<sup>184</sup> Both acts made it more difficult for immigrants of color to enter the UK. The racialization of British-ness continued, and became a more entrenched part of public discourse. Talal Asad discusses the evocation of race when the word “immigrant” is used, when he says:

In contemporary Britain, the word immigrant has come to be identified by public opinion with non-European settlers—largely people from the Caribbean and South Asia. This is significant because the term is applied to the offspring of these immigrants, even though they have been born in Britain, but it does not apply to white immigrants, who are, according to the 1981 census, a more numerous category than nonwhite immigrants.<sup>185</sup>

Enoch Powell became one of the more prominent figures in tying race to British identity in the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps his most famous speech, known as the “rivers of blood” speech,<sup>186</sup> was made on April 20, 1968, the same day as Hitler’s birthday. His speeches, grounded in his knowledge, convictions, and rhetorical skill, had a deep impact on the way Britons saw themselves.

Two parties with distinct racist biases, the National Front and the British National Party (BNP), both drew heavily from Powell’s visions. Their success at the polls further legitimized the notion that English meant white. For example, as late as 1993 the BNP won seats from the

---

184 Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 100.

185 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 253.

186 Enoch Powell, “Rivers of Blood.” ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rivers\\_of\\_Blood](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rivers_of_Blood)).

Tower Hamlets district, an area with a large, predominately Bangladeshi minority and this indicated the disenfranchisement of communities of color. The Constitution of the BNP clearly states

[Section 1: 2b] The British National Party stands for the preservation of the national and ethnic character of the British people and is wholly opposed to any form of racial integration between British and non-European peoples.

...

[Section 2: 1] Membership of the BNP is strictly defined within the terms of, and our members also self define themselves within, the legal ambit of a defined 'racial group' this being 'Indigenous Caucasian' and defined 'ethnic groups' emanating from that Race.<sup>187</sup>

It was in this context of political and popular racist discourse that helped to define the political activism of the Asian community in the late 1980s. The second-generation of the third wave of immigration appear to have become more comfortable with their British identities and were not averse to demanding equal treatment under the law.<sup>188</sup> They not only mobilized politically, but became involved in anti-racist collectives and began to enter public discourse at the popular level. As race was one of the defining elements of the Asian community from a Briton's perspective, the Asian community had to deal with questions of race in their constructions of self.

## Racial Issues

The issues surrounding racial identification for Asians in Britain are complicated by lack of a sophisticated popular terminology for issues of race, and as I move into discussing this area of immigrant life, I want to explain the difference between "race" and "ethnicity." The terms are

---

187 British National Party, *Constitution of the British National Party*, 8th ed. (Hertfordshire: British National Party, 2004).

188 Sally Westwood, "Gendering Diaspora: Space, Politics, and South Asian Masculinities in Britain," in *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. Peter van der Veer, South Asia Seminar Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Nabeel Zuberi, "'The Last Truly British People You Will Ever Know': Skinhead, Pakis, and Morrissey," in *Hop on Pop: the Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*, ed. Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, Jane Shattuc (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

distinct, but have overlapping meanings. However, because the community that I am discussing is so well-defined, second-generation South Asian immigrants to Great Britain — as well as in the US — the terms can be used interchangeably, although the sources may treat them differently. In brief, ethnicity is defined by cultural practices and belonging, while race is generally predicated on phenotype.<sup>189</sup> Another way of formulating the division is to say one takes on an ethnic identity, but one is given a racial identity. Since the rhetoric in Britain revolved around race I will often use that term. However, when referring to ethnic enclaves, or ethnic practices, I am not signalling a different community, but using the terms “ethnicity” and “race” as synonyms.

From the earliest period of South Asian entry to Great Britain the term black is used to describe anyone who is not white.<sup>190</sup> The generic catchphrase had practical implications on group solidarity as witnessed by the willingness of Indians to be sent to Sierra Leone as part of a repatriation scheme in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The second wave of immigrants was part of the debate on the legal relationship between race and citizenship; a debate that continues throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Associating South Asians and blacks became standard rhetoric, and in many instances this association occurred in other Commonwealth countries as well.<sup>191</sup>

## **The Ethnic Community**

In discussing how ethnic communities are formed, I draw heavily on research done on US immigrants. The terminology that is developed in the US is useful for describing similar phenomena in England, but I recognize that the exact mechanisms are not the same. I follow other authors who use the labels with similar caveats.<sup>192</sup> However, by using the same terms it is

---

189 A notable exception to the phenotypic basis of race is the “one drop” rule that exists in American racial discourse. Any individual who has one drop of black blood is considered black, regardless of physical appearance.

190 In earlier periods, both Jews and Irish were also considered “black.” This situation is similar to the one found in the US. See {Aspinall, 2002, #3718; Barrett and Roediger, 1997, #61; Brodtkin, 1998, #58; Ignatiev, 1996, #73}

191 Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 330.

192 Peter J. Aspinall, “Collective Terminology to Describe the Minority Ethnic Population: The Persistence of Confusion and Ambiguity in Usage,” *Sociology* 36, no. 4 (2002): 803-816; Mike Cole, “Ethnicity, ‘Status Groups’ and Racialization: A Contribution to a Debate on National Identity in Britain,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 5 (2003): 962-969; James Y. Nazroo and Saffron Karlsen, “Patterns of Identity Among Ethnic Minority People: Diversity and Commonality,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 5 (2003): 902-930; Martin O’Flaherty et al., “Home Visits: Transnationalism among Australian Migrants,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 5 (2007): 817-844;

easier to see connections across countries and I do not use them with the same rigor that a paper focusing on the sociology of immigrants would require.

The construction of barriers to the acceptance immigrants and their children into the mainstream of British society creates what is known as a racialized ethnicity, a conflation between race and ethnicity based on phenotype.<sup>193</sup> In response to this marginalization, the second-generation further distanced themselves from the mainstream by using ethnic markers to reify difference, a process called reactive ethnicity.<sup>194</sup> Racialized and reactive ethnicity can work synergistically to create a feedback mechanism that further inhibits assimilation. However, the same mechanism also promotes greater trans-ethnic ties with other marginal groups.<sup>195</sup> These ties operate not only intra-nationally, but internationally as well, so that not only are there ties between South Asians and blacks for example, but also South Asians in other countries. At the local level, this type of association is called “segmented assimilation.” Implicit in this type of assimilation is the recognition that the UK represents a diverse society in which immigrants can associate with ethnic groups other than the mainstream.<sup>196</sup>

For example, the opposing rhetoric of Enoch Powell and the Black Power Movement coincided to create a new sense of racial awareness in Asian immigrants.<sup>197</sup> The formation of a well-articulated racial consciousness was transmitted to the second-generation, and the elements that helped to create this consciousness – racism and militant identity politics – helped to structure the approach of the second-generation in expressing their own British-Asian identity.

## **The First Generation**

(Im)migrants draw on their cultural memory, and one part of that memory is the first-

---

Hasmita Ramji, “British Indians ‘Returning Home’: An Exploration of Transnational Belongings,” *Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2006): 645-662.

193 Bandana Purkayastha, *Negotiating Ethnicity*, 2, 10.

194 *Ibid.*, 10.

195 *Ibid.*, 10, 13.; Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*, 16.

196 Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530 (1993): 74-96.

197 Nabeel Zuberi, *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music*, Transnational Cultural Studies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 186.

generation of immigrants. These immigrants faced the same issues that the second-generation of immigrants now faces with respect to marginalization from the racial mainstream. Members of the first-generation also turned to poetry to express their alienation from British society, amongst many other topics. Joginder Shamsher, in his work on Panjabi poetry in Britain, says that while some members of the first-generation experimented with new poetic forms, such as beat poetry,<sup>198</sup> the majority continued to write poetry in a South Asian language integrating themes of immigrant exile and alienation. The lack of interaction with a broader community creates an obstacle to belonging to British society. The economic realities of immigrant life mean that these individuals remain at the margins. In addition, there is the external factor of racism that keeps these men — it is predominately men writing this poetry at this time — from embracing England as their own. Shamsher says, “[a] feature of this poetry is its sensitivity to racial discrimination and its indignant protest against it. Britain is seen as a centre of racial discrimination, felt at every level by everyone who is not white, whether he be Asian or Caribbean.”<sup>199</sup>

This sort of racialized ethnicity results in trans-ethnic identifications, and common cause is found with Britain’s blacks. This sort of bonding works intra-nationally and internationally, so we find many immigrant poets concerned with international affairs, often through a racial focus. Shamsher quotes a poem was written in an act of solidarity with blacks who were marginalized in “America, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia to challenge the power of the white racialists.”<sup>200</sup>

(Im)migrant artists seem to be recreating or sampling *qawwālī* rather than creating new texts. These artists are creating hybrid works and appear to be working with two distinct categories of material: Islamicate literary texts and musical systems. The texts are almost inviolate, but the musical systems they are married to are more flexible, and show a great deal more intercultural<sup>201</sup> interaction. One of the most prolific (im)migrant groups in the UK is Fun^Da^Mental (FDM), and through their long history they have experimented with several

---

198 Joginder Shamsher and Ralph Russell, “Panjabi Poetry in Britain,” *New Community* VI, no. 3 (1978), 304.

199 Ibid., 301.

200 Ibid., 302.

201 Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 12, 64.

different sound systems. As a result, they showcase both the conservation of the text and the “diasporic interculture”<sup>202</sup> of their music.

## **Fun^Da^Mental (FDM)**

### **Biography**

Mark Slobin uses the term “diasporic interculture” to refer to music that is composed of “linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries.”<sup>203</sup> His term is a useful shorthand to tie together both the idea of diasporic consciousness and the subculture, or imagined community, of South Asians attempting to resist their marginal racial status. In addition, it references the notion of cross-ethnic affiliation that we discussed earlier. This diasporic interculture is embodied by FDM’s members.

FDM is composed of two core individuals: Aki “Propa-Gandhi”<sup>204</sup> Nawaz (né Haq Nawaz Qureishi) and David “Impi-D” Watts, also known as DJ WattsRiot. There are other individuals who work with the group, such as Man Tharoo (Goldfinger), DJ Obeah, Bad-Sha Lallaman, Amir Ali, Count Dubulah, Inder Matharu, MC Mushtaq, and Hot Dog Dennis. Since Nawaz and Watts are the longest serving members of the band, and the ones who appear on the FDM website,<sup>205</sup> I will focus my attention on them.

Nawaz is of Panjabi descent, born near Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and migrated to the UK in 1964.<sup>206</sup> He was part of a post-punk/goth band, Southern Death Cult, as a percussionist in the 1980s before founding FDM in 1991. Watts was born in London, grew up in Canada, and is of Bajan descent. He joined the group in 1993 and remains an active member to this day. The multi-ethnic nature of the group reflects the reality of political and racial marginalization that creates

---

202 Ibid., 64.

203 Ibid.

204 Other printed variations include “Propa-Ghandi,” “PropaGhandi,” and “PropaGandhi.”

205 “Official Fun-Da-Mental Website.” (<http://www.fun-da-mental.co.uk/>).

206 Aki Nawaz shared this date with me via personal communication and indicated it was before he was 7 years of age. This age means that he is considered part of the 1.5 generation. The 1.5 generation are children who came to their host country prior to the age of 7. The criteria is used to indicate that these children are not true second-generation, but in terms of identification are more akin to the second-generation than the first-generation.

inter-ethnic alliances. Nawaz, when asked if the combination of an Asian and a Black in the group was reflective of English reality, responded:

You know there are problems with the Asian and African communities, you know, culture and all that sort of thing, I think it all goes off into the different paths but on that issue I'd rather generalize; I think we have more in common than we don't have [,] so when I say about people being black who are like ... white people who are politically in a black situation.<sup>207</sup>

In his response, Nawaz recognized that cultural differences are important, but disenfranchisement is a powerful force that ties communities together. By marking "black" as a political category he also recognizes that race is only one factor contributing to unequal power relations. It is possible for someone who is phenotypically white to not be considered "white," and to find themselves in a politically "black" situation.

Islam is a core part of Nawaz' ideology and it is reflected in his music. Watts, who is not Muslim, believes that the issues about Islam that are addressed by the band reflect wider political concerns and various forms of oppression.<sup>208</sup> The band's first album, *Seize the Time* (1995), is perhaps the most "Islamic" that they have produced, using recitations from the Qur'an, devotional lines in Arabic, and addressing Islamophobia. However, it also deals with broader questions of oppression and South Asian identity.

### **Erotic Terrorism**

Unlike *Seize the Time*, very little has been written about FDM's later albums. On these albums there is a shift in language away from English and a change in musical styles to electronica. I believe that because of these changes, the texts are harder to read. *Seize the Time*, is embedded in the specific situation of Asians in Britain. Although there are general connections made with South Asia on the track "Mother India," and several mentions of a pan-Islamic identity, the vast majority of lyrics deal with British racism. *Erotic Terrorism* (1998) has no songs directly addressing anti-Asian sentiment in Great Britain. The liner notes of the album are

---

207 Quoted in Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia: Negotiating Ethnicity on the UK Music Scene*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 165.

208 Ibid., 117.

simply the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). FDM is investing itself in broader struggle of oppressed people internationally while still keeping its primary interest in anti-racist activity in Britain.

The two songs on the album *Erotic Terrorism* that I will be examining are “One Ness (dhann a dhann)” and “Ja Sha Taan (Joo Ley Lal Mustt Qalander).” Both make reference to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, a heroic figure in Islamicate literatures. Habibeh Rahim has looked at ‘Alī as a hero in both medieval Persian and 20<sup>th</sup> century Urdu poetry.<sup>209</sup> In her analysis she establishes the positive reception of ‘Alī in various schools of Muslim thought and shows how he is used to represent the notion of *fatā*, or hero. She focuses on the famous Urdu poet and philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938), whom she believes represents a modernizing force on South Asian Islamicate literature, and his use of ‘Alī as symbol.<sup>210</sup> According to her, Iqbāl, who was influenced by the thought of Friederich Nietzsche, adapted the idea of the *übermensch* to apply to ‘Alī<sup>211</sup>. Iqbāl considered ‘Alī to be *insān-i kāmīl* (the perfect man)<sup>212</sup> and *mard-i khud-dār* (self-possessed man).<sup>213</sup> However, unlike Nietzsche’s idea, this perfection does not come by leaving God; it comes by fully realizing one’s relationship with God and becoming the perfect slave of God.<sup>214</sup> This conception of servitude (*bandagi* or *ibādah*) leads to a life of action. According to Rahim, Iqbāl believed South Asians had become “politically and socio-culturally disoriented under British rule, [and encouraged them] not to indulge in laments and complaints, but to emulate ‘Alī and lead a life of positive action.”<sup>215</sup> Iqbāl’s impact on the popular culture of South Asia is quite profound. He is considered the national poet of Pakistan and he is the author of India’s unofficial national anthem *tarānah-i hindī* (Indian Anthem).<sup>216</sup> His use of the figure of

---

209 Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested: ‘Alī B. Abi Talib’s Image in Classical Persian and Modern Indian Muslim Poetry” (PhD diss, Harvard University, 1989).

210 Ibid., 485.

211 Ibid., 487.

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid., 486.

214 Ibid., 487.

215 Ibid., 486.

216 The poem is actually written as a *ghazal*, and begins سارے جہاں سے اچھا ہندوستان ہمارا اہم بلبلے ہیں اس کی یہ گلستان ہمارا (Our India is better than the [rest] of the world/We are its nightingales, this rose-garden of ours).

‘Alī serves to show both the impact ‘Alī has on the modern literary imagination and how he is used in a political setting. Using the activist voice that Iqbāl suggests makes it easier to understand how and why FDM is using *qawwālīs* that honor ‘Alī.

In “One Ness,” the *qawwālī* begins with the following lines in Panjabi:

دھن دھن بہاگ اس بندہ دہ

نام علی جہڑا لینداے

نام لیا ہر کم ہو جاوے

نام علی او نام علی

That person is fortunate

who takes the name of ‘Alī.

Taking his name, anything can be done.

The name of ‘Alī, the name of ‘Alī

The use of Panjabi is at one level an ethnically divisive language, and at another level helps to tie the (im)migrant community together. It is not a national language, like Hindi or Urdu, although it is a language of a state found in both India and Pakistan. Because of its close linguistic ties to Hindustani, it is understandable to those who understand Hindustani<sup>217</sup> with very little effort. The majority of South Asians who immigrated to the UK were from Panjab, Pakistan, helping to establish *bhangra* as a dominant cultural expression of South Asians, regardless of point of origin and as a result, Panjabi became an identifiable language of South Asian-ness.<sup>218</sup> The use of Panjabi in *qawwālīs* is not unusual, but in this context it takes on the added resonance of community marker. The verse itself is clear that anything can be achieved by calling on ‘Alī.

---

217 I am reluctant to use Hindustani-speakers with respect to the (im)migrant community as the ability to understand a language does not equal the ability to speak that language, especially in second-generation communities.

218 Raminder Kaur and Virinder S. Kalra, “New Paths for South Asian Identity and Musical Creativity,” in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, ed. Sanjay Sharma et al. (London: Zed Books, 1996), 219.

Using Iqbāl's understanding of 'Alī it is reasonable to suggest that FDM is attempting to call their listeners to action. By taking the name of 'Alī, by looking at 'Alī as a role-model, the (im)migrant community can take action. What that action is, and in what context, remains unclear at this point in the song.

The remaining verses in the song are in Hindustani, a common form of the national languages of Urdu and Hindi, serving as a unifying element in (im)migrant identity, as attested to by the consumption of Bollywood movies in diaspora communities.<sup>219</sup> The next verse is:

علی کے نام سن کہ میں آیا ہوں دور سے دور سے دور سے

جھولی کو میری بھر دو محبت کے نور سے

I came from afar upon hearing 'Alī's name

Fill my being with the light of love

This lyric seems to function as a rallying cry for an activist agenda. The listener should come upon hearing the name of 'Alī from wherever she is. When she arrives at her destination, her being should be filled with love. The love could be of the good actions that 'Alī represents, or a self-reflective love of the Asian community in England. This latter idea, of a community that loves itself, is further supported by a reading of the next verse:

کون ہے منکر

کون ہے مومن

نام علی کا لے کر دیکھو

یہ ہے منکر

وہ ہے مومن

دونوں کی پہچان علی ہے

Who is the disbeliever?

---

219 See note 39.

Who is the believer?

Take the name of ‘Alī and see.

This is the disbeliever,

That is the believer.

The difference between the two is ‘Alī

In this section ‘Alī is clearly being used as a divider between an “insider” group and an “outsider” group. The insider group knows ‘Alī. Specifically, they know that ‘Alī is a sign for a particular cultural expression, the *qawwālī*. Members of the outsider community may hear the music, and they may appreciate it, but they do not recognize ‘Alī; they do not recognize the culture as their own. However, the consumption of *qawwālī* by the outsider group functions as a bridge between the insider and outsider groups. Yuri Lotman makes a similar point when discussing the use of an obscure poem by the Russian author Pushkin. He says,

So Pushkin’s text split his readership into two groups: an extremely small group who could understand the text thanks to their detailed familiarity with extra-textual experiences shared with the author; and the great mass of readers who sense that something is being alluded to, but cannot decipher what it is. But the readers grasp that the text is demanding an attitude of close friendship with the poet, and they *imagine* themselves to be in such a relationship with the poem. A secondary effect of the undeciphered allusion is to put *each* reader into the position of intimate friend of the author, one who possesses a special, unique, shared memory which enables him or her to explain the allusions.<sup>220</sup>

Arguably, the last verse shows FDM’s particular interest in the intersection between Islamophobia and racism. This particular section shows FDM expressing their Muslim identity in addition to their Asian and Black identities. The words relate to a particular understanding of the birth of ‘Alī and have referents that would only have Muslims as a potential audience. The lyrics are:

---

220 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 67.

گر حسین کا باپ نہ ہوتا

کعبہ ہر گز پاک نہ ہوتا

دنیا میں اسلام نہ ہوتا

سمجھو یہ احسان علی ہے

علی کو ہتھ<sup>221</sup> میں اتارا جو عین کعبہ میں

کھولی جو آنکھ تو پہلی خدا کے گھر<sup>222</sup> دیکھا

If the father of Ḥusayn had not been

The Ka‘aba would never have been purified

There would have been no Islam in the world

Understand this is the grace of ‘Alī

[God] placed ‘Alī by His hand like the ‘ain in the Ka‘bah

So that when ‘Alī opened his eyes the first thing he saw was the House of God.<sup>223</sup>

The traditional story is that ‘Alī, the father of Ḥusayn, was born in the Ka‘bah, a sacred space for Muslims across the world. ‘Alī’s elevated spiritual status is “proven” in this selection by God willing ‘Alī to be born in the holy area. The medial letter of the Ka‘bah is the letter ‘ain (ع), so God placed ‘Alī in the middle of the Ka‘bah like the ‘ain, using a strong visual pun that is tied intimately to the listener’s familiarity with the Urdu script and Arabic loan words. Muslim traditions state that the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī cleansed the Ka‘bah of idols in order to make it an appropriate locus of Muslim worship. This last verse adds another layer of identity to the composition and can be read as a declaration of FDM’s Muslim affinity.

The song “One Ness (dhann a dhann)” represents three levels of expressive identity.

---

221 The standard spelling of hand is ہاتھ, but the vocalization is clearly short for metrical purposes.

222 A later repetition of the verse has خدا کا گھر, which seems to make more grammatical sense.

223 The Ka‘aba is considered by Muslims as the House of God, built by Abraham and Ishmael.

There is the Muslim character of FDM that is accessible through an understanding of the final verse of the song. There is a broader Asian identification that is represented by the *qawwālī* as a whole. By combining the traditional instruments of a *qawwālī* performance with contemporary synthetic sounds and electronic instruments, the material becomes more accessible to non-Asian Britons. The incorporation of new instrumentation helps to emphasize the strong beats of the music and allow them to be heard aloud. The music is more sound system friendly, including in portable sound systems found in cars, meaning that it can be consumed more easily and by wider audiences than before the aural enhancements.

The particular reading of this text as a way to define community, as a way to reach out to others, and as a political statement is supported by the vocal sample that ends the piece. Aki Nawaz reads the following piece that he wrote:

Changes? You think there have been a lot of changes? Na. The small amount of changes that have come, have come from the pure, stubborn love and sacrifice of many, many black people. Just for the little bit of change you can still see racism, you can still see it in people's eyes. It just doesn't balance out, that amount of struggle for that amount of change doesn't make sense whatsoever. And I'm sure that people are just accommodating. Accommodating us, that's all it is. That isn't change. Accommodation is not change.

He clearly believes that racism is a concern in British society and that while many black people have sacrificed themselves to rid Britain of racism, it persists.<sup>224</sup> Implicit in the line “It just doesn't balance out, that amount of struggle for that amount of change doesn't make sense whatsoever” is a call to greater action. Societal change must happen quicker and at less of a cost to the victims — Britain's blacks. Accommodation of darker-skinned peoples, foreigners, immigrants, blacks, and various “others” is simply an expression of racist power structures in new forms. White society can decide that it no longer desires to be accommodating and return to overtly oppressing people of color. The term “acceptance” implies the same sort of power relationships, with whites being in a position to determine belonging. As a result, official rhetoric changes to be perceived as less assimilationary and more integrationist. However, the change in

---

224 It is possible that the “sacrifice” here refers to those who give up aspects of their culture to be accepted into the host society. However, the tone of the song and the sample seem to suggest a more revolutionary direction.

language does not alter that the official discussion is about an absolute definition of “Britishness.” Although the particular period this album is embedded in deals with “acceptance,” the general framework can be applied to later rhetorical changes as well.

The other song on the album that I wish to discuss is “Ja Sha Taan (Joo Ley Lal Mustt Qalander)” (JST), which shares some of the same characteristics as “One Ness,” but also has additional material that allows one to see how FDM is invested in the process of making Asian space in Britain. The track begins with an uncredited sample from a blues song, and lyric is “I’m an evil man, don’t you bother with me.” Several people, most notably Sylviane Diouf, have speculated that blues music has some relationship to the sounds with which West African Muslim slaves were familiar.<sup>225</sup> The relationship between blues and certain slave music is current in African-American popular discourse,<sup>226</sup> so it is not unreasonable to assume that FDM is referencing this idea.

The sample itself is unadorned and sounds more like part of a rap song than an electronica one since it is repeated *in toto* only at the beginning and the end of the piece. Russell Potter argues that the selection of samples in hip-hop helps to establish a political vision,<sup>227</sup> but, unlike a clip of Malcolm X, this sample offers no direct political commentary. The selection makes more sense when combined with the other sample on the song:

Multi-culturalism is a divisive force. One can’t uphold two sets of ethics, or be loyal to two nations, anymore than a man can have two masters. Youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history, is their history, is their history.<sup>228</sup>

---

225 Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 196-198. See also Jonathan Curiel, “Muslim Roots of the Blues: The Music of Famous American Blues Singers Reaches Back Through the South to the Culture of West Africa.” (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/08/15/INGMC85SSK1.DTL>).; Fatima El Shibli, “Islam and the Blues,” *Souls* 9, no. 2 (2007): 162-170.

226 Kathleen Malone O’Connor, “The Islamic Jesus: Messiahhood and Human Divinity in African American Muslim Exegesis,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 3 (1998), 517; LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1999).

227 Russell A. Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism*, The SUNY Series in Postmodern Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 44.

228 See Michael White, “Hague Fury At Tory ‘Dinosaurs’: Leader’s Debut Marred By Sniping.”

Lord Norman Tebbit (b. 1931), the speaker of this particular selection, is a former leading member of Conservative Party in the UK. In this clip, Lord Tebbit says that those who do not conform to his understanding of British history are not truly British. He calls for an education system that tells only the British version of events, a troubling idea for people who come from former colonies and who fear the denigration and obfuscation of the savagery of the colonial enterprise. According to Lord Tebbit, in order to be truly British, immigrants must deny a part of their identity. He also holds that any ethical system other than the British system is in opposition to British ethics. His assumption is that anything not British like him will destroy Britain, and that everyone must adopt his understanding of Britishness. In light of these comments, the purpose of the other clip “I’m an evil man, don’t you bother with me” becomes clear. FDM uses it as a statement of (im)migrant identity. (Im)migrants are part of two cultures and recognize other place(s) as having importance in their identities. British history is their history both as British subjects and because of the legacy of colonialism. They see history from the perspective of both the colonizer and the colonized. Because they have this split-vision, this double-consciousness,<sup>229</sup> one can argue that they are “evil” in Lord Tebbit’s world-view. This is the first connection between the two samples. The second part of the sample, “don’t you bother with me,” can be read in two ways. First, it is a declaration to leave the (im)migrant community alone. It has no intention of changing, so those who wish it to change should not expend the effort. Second, if Lord Tebbit, as a synecdoche for anti-immigration groups, believes the (im)migrant community to be problematic, why is he expending so much time and effort in defining it?

These samples frame the song JST, which seems to address these points of isolation and community building. The first verse refers to a well-known Sindhi holy man J<sup>h</sup>ūle Lāl whose hagiography holds that he was born in Sindh in the late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century, and is an *avatār* (incarnation, manifestation) of the Hindu God Vishnu.<sup>230</sup> Muslims honor him as a Sufi by the name of Zindah Pīr,<sup>231</sup> and he seems to have been conflated with a 13<sup>th</sup> century mystic Lāl

---

(<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/conservatives/story/0,451799,00.html>).

229 W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” in *Writings*, ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 363-371.

230 Steven Wesley Ramey, “Defying Borders: Contemporary Sindhi Hindu Constructions of Practices and Identifications” (PhD diss, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004), 218-219.

231 *Ibid.*, 222.

Shahbāz Qalandar.<sup>232</sup> Shahbāz Qalandar’s shrine is also located in Sindh, on an important site of the Hindu God Shiva,<sup>233</sup> contributing to the conflation between the two “Lāl”s. Some authors<sup>234</sup> and *qawwāls*<sup>235</sup> treat the two figures as one. However, by recognizing the figures as two different individuals, the song can speak to the broader questions of South Asian identity building. By using a figure conflating Hindu and Muslim heroes no religious tradition is removed from the sense of belonging.

The *qawwālī* itself is immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with the art form, and because of its fast beat, is a favorite in performance.

دم مست مست

جھولے لال قلندر

مست مست

### Call the intoxicated Qalandar J<sup>h</sup>ūle Lāl

In the verse he is described as a *qalandar*, a wandering mystic, unaffiliated with any Sufi *ṭarīqah* (order).<sup>236</sup> While not considered evil, *qalandars* are known for antinomian practices and living

---

232 Michel Boivin, “Le Pèlerinage de Sehwan Sharīf, Sindh (Pakistan): Territoires, Protagonistes et Rituels,” in *Les Pèlerinages au Maghreb et au Moyen-orient: Espaces Publics, Espaces Du Public*, ed. Sylvia Chiffolleau and Anna Madoeuf (Beyrouth: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2005), 323. “L’assimilation des deux figures s’exprime enfin par l’attribution d’un même surnom, celui de Jhule Lāl.”

233 Ibid., 312.

234 Shemeem Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 26. She translates the line “Jhule Lālan” as “O thou of the cradle.” While correct insofar as *J<sup>h</sup>ūle* means “swing or cradle,” it seems to ignore “Lāl,” and therefore a potential reference to another figure.

235 For example, on Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s album *Shahbaaz* (1991), there are two tracks “Shahbaaz Qalandar” and “Jewleh Lal,” indicating some sense of difference. However, the notes go on and state “Shahbaaz Qalandar and Jewleh Lal are both immensely popular traditional lyrics about the thirteenth century Sufi master Lal Shahbaaz Qalandar (the Red Falcon).” Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, “Shahbaaz.” Realworld Records, 1991, liner notes.

236 While not part of a formal structure, the *qalandars* did have a common approach to their mysticism. See J.T.P. De Bruijn, “The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sanā’ī Onwards,” in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 77-78; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 39-44.

semi-solitary lives.<sup>237</sup> They are noted for their exceptional devotion and are often considered “saintly.”<sup>238</sup> The *qalandar* reverses the notion of an evil man, forcing a more nuanced understanding of what difference means. Superficial appearances would cast a *qalandar* to the margins. However, to do so would miss the value a *qalandar* could bring to society. Lord Tebbit’s remarks attempt to marginalize immigrants in England, thereby missing the potential benefits they bring to England such as FDM’s artistic and political contributions.

The third and fourth verses are in praise of ‘Alī:

جنگل بحر سمندر کہتے حیدری علی علی  
 مشکل تو میری حل کرو مشکل کشا علی  
 علی علی علی علی علی علی دم  
 علی علی علی علی علی

The jungle, the oceans all say they are devotees of ‘Alī.

‘Alī ‘Alī

Ease my difficulties, remover of difficulties ‘Alī

Call ‘Alī

We have already seen how ‘Alī is used as a call to action. In this particular lyric, “the jungles, the oceans all say they are devotees of ‘Alī,” there is a move away from limiting access to ‘Alī to Asian only. The phrase “the jungles, the oceans” is meant to represent all of creation, so anyone can participate in the action represented by ‘Alī. In the same way, FDM is attempting to reach out to anyone, Asian or not, to make space for Asians in English society.

### **There Shall Be Love!**

The album *There Shall Be Love! (TSBL)* (2001) shows a different direction in the growth

---

237 J.T.P. De Bruijn, “The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sanā’ī Onwards,” 76; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*.

238 The technical term is *walī* (ولی), or friend, of God (*walī-e khudā* ولی خدا or *walī allah* ولی الله).

of FDM's politics. Whereas *Erotic Terrorism* expands FDM's thinking to questions of human rights and broadening who it included in its coalition, *TSBL* forms international alliances, including Tuvan throat singers Huun Huur Tu and South African musicians Zamo Mbuto and Comrades. FDM is also working with new South Asian sounds, including Bāul music with Bapi Das Baul.<sup>239</sup> The international, trans-ethnic coalition building of FDM reflects both its commitment to putting its politics of radical equality into practice and the understanding of oppressed peoples having certain common interests. While there are several songs with a South Asian influence, only two, "Polution," and "The Last Gospel," include *qawwālī* elements.

FDM performs both tracks with the Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali group, which has as members two nephews of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. "The Last Gospel," opens with a sample of Mahalia Jackson (1911-1962), a well-known US gospel singer, performing the gospel "Amazing Grace." The gospel itself is tied to the anti-slavery movement in England, and eventually became important to the African-American and Native American communities. Both the song and singer are recognizable, even though only the first line, "amazing grace, how sweet the sound," is sampled. The sound immediately conjures notions of suffering, longing, and liberation. When asked about the use of gospel with *qawwālī*, Aki Nawaz responded:

Well, musically it's a very limited idea but it's to draw attention to the connection between gospel music and qawwali music. And then you can go into deeper, into what they're singing about. A lot of these quwwalis [sic] and gospels are based on the same things,<sup>240</sup> the people that we forget that were the real heroes. Prophets and saints who had power in their hands to have big palaces and to dwell in that world of luxury, but they didn't. And to me they're the real heroes. They didn't become hypocrites and contradict what their whole substance was about. Jesus was great resistance fighter.<sup>241</sup>

---

239 The Bāuls are an Islamicate mystical group based in Bengal in eastern India and in Bangladesh. Their music is functionally similar to *qawwālī*, although stylistically different. Like *qawwālī*, the music of the Bāuls crosses religious and ethnic lines. For more information on the Bāuls and their music, see Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

240 This comment brings to mind a *qawwālī* album by Mehar and Sher Ali, *Qawwali Jam: Islamic Gospel* (1997).

241 dimm summer, "exclusive interview with Aki Nawaz & Dave Watts of Fun^Da^Mental."

For Nawaz, the use of gospel and *qawwālī* refers to a spiritual commonality of their heroes. In addition, these heroes were also resistance fighters who were presumably fighting for a better world. Nawaz is attempting to create ways for non-Asians to interact with, and relate to, the music. By using “Amazing Grace,” he references a recognizable American musical idiom, a recognizable American singer, and a song that is tied to American identity, but which has its origin in Great Britain. He uses that song to bridge a gap between “Christian,” and “Muslim” identities by putting two sets of devotional music next to each other. The *qawwālī* portion of the song is another text in praise of ‘Alī, mixing both Urdu and Panjabi lyrics.

The words are similar to earlier songs by FDM that reference ‘Alī. However, there is one line that is slightly different:

رب دا اے شیر سو بنا میرا پیر علی

[Panjabi] My *pīr*<sup>242</sup> ‘Alī is the beloved lion of God

Here, the word *pīr* is used to indicate a person of great spiritual standing. Since Nawaz sees the saints as heroes of the faith, he is clearly putting ‘Alī into that category. ‘Alī then represents a fighter for a better world, and his chivalry was discussed earlier. The Persian epithet *sher* is used to denote that ‘Alī is a lion of God. This name is derived from the Arabic name *Ḥaydar*, given to him by his mother, and the Arabic *asad*, which were used to denote his martial and spiritual virtues.<sup>243</sup> The use of the word *sher* so close to *pīr* allows Nawaz to use ‘Alī as a role-model of both piety and action.

Nawaz has stated publicly that he considers his work to be about being human. In an interview he states “First and foremost you consider yourself as a human being, you know, that’s it. Everything else is like little categories, everything else is a debate and an issue and I think that is part of the confusion. It’s very, very confusing, it’s like how you deal with it.”<sup>244</sup> FDM has taken a stance that attempts to collapse categories that divide people and seeks a vision of radical

---

([http://www.ethnotechno.com/int/int\\_aki-dave\\_6.01.02.php](http://www.ethnotechno.com/int/int_aki-dave_6.01.02.php)).

242 Literally an old man, but here meaning spiritual master, guide, or teacher.

243 Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested,” 216.

244 Quoted in Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia*, 165.

equality. However, that does not mean that they exist outside of a community. In the case of Nawaz, he is conscious of his Muslim, Asian, and Black identifications, and uses all of them to build community and coalitions. Just as FDM pulls on Asian lyrical traditions and non-Asian musical forms to create community, so too does the The Dub Factory.

## **The Dub Factory**

### **Biography**

The Dub Factory (DF) is one man, M. Parvez.<sup>245</sup> He says that “as an Asian living in a multi-cultural area of Leicester I had a variety of influences as a youth. Reggae was the main music at that time. The big basslines echoed off the walls day and night and just became part of my life.”<sup>246</sup> He appears on Bally Sagoo’s record label, ISHQ [love] Records. According to Gayatri Gopinath, Sagoo should be credited with helping to move India and the UK into a “sonic diaspora, so that it [the nation] no longer provided the anchor for notions of diasporic return, authenticity, and purity.”<sup>247</sup> Parvez seems to continue the tradition of moving beyond notions of authenticity and purity with his album entitled *Revolution: Qawali meets Roots Reggae* (2000).

### **Revolution**

The title of the album declares its intent and its origins. It is a combination of *qawwālī* — including material in the *ghazal* tradition — and reggae music. The album contains several *ghazals*, but I have chosen to focus on the only *qawwālī* “Ali Ali.” For Parvez, the revolution is one of unity, love, and peace. It is an idyllic, almost utopian vision in which his music brings everyone together.<sup>248</sup> Such an understanding of the music would seem to lend credence to the fear that musical hybridity erases racial specificity and racial struggle.<sup>249</sup>

---

245 He provides no first name.

246 “ISHQ Records The Dub Factory.” (<http://www.ishqrecords.com/dubfacBiog.htm>).

247 Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, Perverse Modernities (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 41.

248 The Dub Factory, “Revolution: Qawali meets Roots Reggae.” Ishq Records, 2000, liner notes.

249 Koushik Banerjea, “Sounds of Whose Underground?: The Fine Tuning of Diaspora in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Theory Culture & Society* 17, no. 3 (2000), 75.

DF uses both forms of reggae, roots and dancehall, to create a music that is both culturally specific to Asians in the UK and part of a transnational network. Parvez draws on the religious component of roots to integrate Islamicate literatures, making the work distinctively Asian, while the use of reggae reflects his upbringing in Britain. He brings in an Indian musician to supplement his own electronic constructions, creating transnational linkages between India and the UK. The resulting sound is not roots, nor dancehall, nor *qawwālī*, but a combination of all these sounds for something unique. It is this *mélange* that creates a unity, not in the absence of race, but because of race. Reggae consciousness reflects marginal identities, and Parvez is attempting to show how to move beyond those identities, as demonstrated by the title “Revolution.”

One of the key images in reggae is that of the lion<sup>250</sup> that represents the animal role model who conquers his enemies.<sup>251</sup> We have seen how the epithet of lion was applied to ‘Alī, so the use of *qawwālī* in praise of ‘Alī’s prowess seems a natural extension of both reggae and *qawwālī* traditions. The album’s second track, and only *qawwālī*, is “Ali Ali.” It begins with telling of ‘Alī’s strength in the battlefield of Khaybar:

علی مولا علی

کبھی دیوار ملتی ہے کبھی در کانپ جاتا ہے

علی کا نام سون کے ابھی خیبر کانپ جاتا ہے

‘Alī Mowlā<sup>252</sup> ‘Alī

Still the walls shake, still the doors quake

Upon hearing the name of ‘Alī, even now Khaybar<sup>253</sup> quakes.

---

250 Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 24.

251 Peter Lamarche Manuel et al., *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music From Rumba to Reggae*, Revised and expanded ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 195.

252 Lord or master.

253 Khaybar is the location of a fort that the Prophet Muhammad could not conquer without the aid of ‘Alī. The story demonstrates the heroic and chivalric qualities of ‘Alī. See Habibeh Rahim, “Perfection Manifested,” 195-196.

The story of Khaybar, now part of popular folklore, describes how ‘Alī was called by the Prophet Muḥammad to tear the door off a fort that Muḥammad’s army had unsuccessfully besieged.<sup>254</sup> This verse references the event of ‘Alī tearing off the door (در کانپ جاتا ہے) and places it in the context of the power of aurality (upon hearing the name of ‘Alī - علی کا نام سون کے). Parvez is linking together aspects of his Asian and Black British identifications through the use of sonic tools. Much like FDM, he is using language to create a system that is only fully open to those who are immersed in Asian cultures. Great Britain is one of the few places where the combination of reggae and *qawwālī* can be produced by someone embedded in both cultures. It is this merging of sounds that is British, so arguably the absence of the English language is what allows the piece to define what it means to belong in Britain. The song demonstrates a freedom from external definitions of English, as well as the internalization of that definition. The multiple identities of Asians are mediated into a cohesive whole that moves beyond what W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) called “double-consciousness” in the American context. Double-consciousness is a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others,”<sup>255</sup> so by excising the sounds of Britain from his work, Parvez is defining a new conception of Britishness that is not defined by a relationship to whiteness.<sup>256</sup>

Through the use of sounds, both in their presence and their absence, The Dub Factory is creating a new soundscape for Britain.<sup>257</sup> They appear on a compilation that has as its tagline “acknowledging history, addressing the present, and constantly looking to the future.”<sup>258</sup> This quote seems to address many of the points discussed so far: the past inflects the present, which contributes to the future of (im)migrants in their host societies. Appearing on that same compilation is the group Asian Dub Foundation (ADF).

## Conclusion

---

254 Ibid., 195.

255 W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” 365.

256 cf. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1982).

257 See Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia*, 147.

258 Various Artists, “Indestructible Asian Beats: Urban Tigers from the Concrete Jungle.” Musicrama, 2001, liner notes.

Although the figure of ‘Alī is important to Sufi and Shi‘ah theological thought, he is also an important historical and cultural figure as well. The incorporation of reverence for ‘Alī into a popular art form like *qawwālī* means that his stories, history, sayings, and examples are integrated into non-Muslim cultures. As *qawwālī* moves from being a Sufi devotional to an Islamicate literature, the political component becomes more evident. ‘Alī, the symbolic warrior, becomes a role model for (im)migrants attempting to create a home for themselves. Their diaspora consciousness encourages the creation of political and cultural alliances in their host society. These alliances are expressed through contemporary hybridization of *qawwālī* with musics like reggae and electronica and lyrics from gospel and blues’ songs. These hybrid creations emphasize a new vision of Britain that incorporates a South Asian presence as active participants in society. One of the strongest points indicating a sense of continuity in the *qawwālī* is the figure of ‘Alī, who represents political engagement and activism for this community.