

## **Divisions among Sikh Communities in Britain and the Role of Caste System: A Case Study of Four Gurdwaras in Multi-Ethnic Leicester**

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The purpose of this article is to clarify the varied historical processes involved in the development of Sikh communities in Britain by studying the history of the Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) in one multi-ethnic city, Leicester. As a Japanese historian, I have been researching on the development of Sikh communities in multi-ethnic Leicester through interviewees of the Sikh communities, and what has emerged as common to the narratives of fission has been the factor of caste. Bearing this in mind, I look at how caste issues influenced divisions in the four Gurdwaras in Leicester, using oral accounts gathered in interviews with those involved. Through this study, I demonstrate that the Sikh communities are grouped and classified in complex ways, and their history cannot be fully understood without the reference to the continued operation of the caste system. Hopefully this article will make a significant contribution to Sikh and Punjab Studies by providing and contextualizing local-specific ethnographic data.

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### **Introduction**

Before starting my main discussion, I should first explain how this project came about. In 2001, I spent time at the Centre for Urban History and the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) as a visiting scholar at the University of Leicester. During my stay I was struck by the fact that over thirty five per cent of the population of Leicester were from ethnic minority groups - a very different situation from the fairly homogeneous society of my home country, Japan. Subsequently, I developed an interest in the history and culture of multi-ethnic Britain after World War Two, focusing on Leicester, with its national and international reputation as a 'beacon of a tolerant multicultural Britain' and 'model of good race relations'.<sup>1</sup> The subject of multiculturalism seemed to be a pressing one to me, given the likelihood of Japan eventually becoming a more multicultural society. After my sabbatical, I began to visit Leicester twice yearly to interview members of both ethnic minority and indigenous groups. I also visited a variety of religious establishments, ethnic community centres, schools, factories, pubs, hospitals, cemeteries and other places, and attended ethnic, religious events and multi-cultural events.<sup>2</sup> Through this research, however, I became aware of the difference between the public image of multi-ethnic Leicester and the real situation on the ground, and began to reconsider the question of 'diversity' as it exists, not only between different ethnic and religious communities but also within ethnic and religious groups. Local

politicians, religious leaders and media use the term ‘diversity’ to promote an image of Leicester in which groups with different ethnic and religious identities live in ‘harmony and tolerance’. But despite this image of harmony between communities, there are significant issues which divide groups within them.<sup>3</sup>

Leicester is a multi-ethnic, multi-faith city located in the English Midlands, with a population of around 280,000. According to the 2001 Census, the number of people who belong to ethnic minority groups is around 101,182, or 36.1 per cent of Leicester’s population, the majority of these being of South Asian origin (i.e. Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis). There are 72,033 residents of Indian origin, making up 25.7 per cent of the city’s population. In terms of religion, while Christians are the most numerous groups, they count for less than half the population (44.7 per cent). Hindus account for 14.7 per cent, Muslims 11.0 per cent (the majority being Indians), and Sikhs 4.2 per cent, in three groups totalling around 30 per cent. Amongst Indian groups, those who came to Britain as political refugees/asylum seekers via East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are economically more prosperous than those who came directly from India, and are more prominent in public life. One of the characteristics of the ethnic minorities in Leicester is that Indian residents hold proportionally more power in economy and politics than members of other groups. They have also worked hard to promote Leicester as a model of ‘community cohesion’ within the UK. Leicester has, therefore, been contrasted with other cities such as Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham in northern England where race riots broke out in 2001.<sup>4</sup> However, this idea that the history of Indians in Leicester is a story of unqualified success is rather simplistic, because economic disparities and spatial segregation still exist within the Indian community. Historians must bear in mind that the Indian community has internal divisions caused by issues such as origin, caste, religion and politics,<sup>5</sup> and it is vital to look further into these issues.

Caste is one of the main causes of the division between Indians. Caste discrimination is most commonly associated with India, but today it is also recognized as an issue in countries such as the UK, Canada and the USA, all of which have residents of Indian origin. In the UK, the Dalit Solidarity Network was established in 1998 to undertake advocacy and lobbying in order to raise awareness of caste discrimination and to campaign for its eradication. The Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance has also been working to eliminate caste discrimination in the UK and more widely. These groups have petitioned the UK Government to enact laws to deal with caste-related crime in the same way as race-related crime. After a House of Lords amendment to the Equality Bill, the Equality Act was formally established in April 2010.<sup>6</sup> However, even while this campaigning was taking place, there was allegedly a ‘caste-related incident’ in Vienna, Austria which resulted in the murder of a Ravidassia spiritual leader. Ravidassia Sikhs in the UK protested against the killing and against what they regarded as caste discrimination.<sup>7</sup> This is why I have chosen to focus on caste divisions which exist within the Sikh community in this paper.

According to the 2001 Census, there are approximately 336,000 Sikhs resident in the UK, the majority in London and the Midlands.<sup>8</sup> Many of them are

immigrants who came directly to Britain from Punjab or via East Africa after World War Two. As the Sikh population grew, it established Gurdwaras, just as it had in the Punjabi villages. These function as central facilities where Sikhs gather, and they play an important role in daily life, and in fostering Sikh religious identity. Today there are several hundred Gurdwaras in the UK.<sup>9</sup> Recently, Sikhs have been constructing new giant Gurdwaras comparable to developments of the new Islamic large-scale mosques and Hindu temples. These giant buildings have changed the urban skyline and some have been dubbed the 'New Cathedrals of Britain'. The history of these Gurdwaras is an extremely valuable topic to those seeking to understand the growth of the Sikh communities in Britain, even though, as Singh and Tatla have pointed out, the Gurdwaras have rarely been the subject of academic attention.<sup>10</sup>

There already exists considerable published research on the history of the Sikhs in the UK. They have pointed out that the Sikh communities in Britain are not as uniformly structured as is generally thought, and that more attention needs to be given to the differences between different castes.<sup>11</sup> This is an important point. However, with the exception of works by Roger Ballard, Ramindar Singh, Nesbitt and Kalsi, most research on Sikh communities considers historical relationships between different Sikh communities without painting a sufficiently detailed picture of individual Sikhs who live in the same city, of their lives or relationships within the community.<sup>12</sup> I would argue that it is essential to analyze the complicated and dynamic historical processes within particular Sikh communities. The reason is that behind the façade of unity which is the public face of Sikhism, there exist problems of caste exclusion and discrimination that cannot be regarded simply as manifestations of 'diversity'. There have been problematic issues facing researchers into this subject in the past, but in this paper I will try to clarify the varied historical processes involved in developing Sikh communities in Britain by studying the history of the Gurdwaras in multi-ethnic and multi-faith Leicester.<sup>13</sup>

The 2001 Census records 10,796 Sikhs living in Leicester.<sup>14</sup> They opened nine Gurdwaras between 1968 and September 2008,<sup>15</sup> and further research will be conducted to discover how these Sikh temples and their congregations developed and formed, and what kinds of relationships existed between them. It is not external pressures on the Sikh community that I focus on here, but the internal divisions; in particular, I wish to consider how caste issues influenced the divisions between the four Gurdwaras in Leicester in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the divisions became clearly visible. Through this study, I will demonstrate how the Sikh communities in Britain are grouped and classified in complex ways, and how the history of their establishment in Britain must be reconstructed taking into account the caste system which still persists in their homeland, the State of Punjab.

During my research into the history of the Sikh community, I used three kinds of research methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and examination of documentary material. First, I made visits to all nine Gurdwaras in Leicester and to some Sikh families, as well as attending Sikh festivals and wedding ceremonies as a participant-observer. I also visited

Gurdwaras in other cities in Britain and in the Punjab region of India. Secondly, with the assistance of the Gurdwara management committees and other Sikhs networks, I conducted 205 interviews with 140 Sikhs (including Gurdwara management committee members); they were aged between eighteen and eighty five, and mainly living in Leicester. The questions were open, allowing them to discourse on many aspects of their lives, the Sikh religion and communities, racism, the caste system and Leicester as a multi-ethnic city, Britain as a multi-ethnic nation, and so on.<sup>16</sup> Although as a Japanese scholar and interviewer I was an 'outsider' in more ways than one, the majority of interviewees responded frankly to these questions and allowed themselves to reveal 'hidden voices'-viewpoints and opinions often obscured behind the 'official' public face of Sikhism. These interviews were therefore particularly valuable to my research. Finally, I have also referred to newspapers, pamphlets, reports, censuses and demographic survey data as additional information.<sup>17</sup>

The paper is divided into five sections. In the first section, I will briefly discuss the growth of Sikh communities and Gurdwaras in multi-ethnic Leicester. In the subsequent three sections, I will describe the process by which Leicester's first Sikh congregation became divided, resulting in a number of new congregations, belonging respectively to Jats (the farmer caste), the Rajputs (a warrior caste), the Ramgarhias (the mason, bricklayer, blacksmith and carpenter castes), and the Ravidassias (Chamar, or skinner and tanner, caste).<sup>18</sup> In the final section, I will suggest some wider conclusions. While there are no members of the Valmiki/Chuhra (the sweeper) and Bhatra (the fortune-teller) castes in Leicester, unlike in Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Leeds and Nottingham, there are members of the Rajput caste.<sup>19</sup> In this paper, I will focus on Leicester when discussing Rajput Sikhs, rather than considering the whole of the UK Rajput community. I will also highlight the importance of my focus on Leicester.

### **The Growth of Sikh Communities and Gurdwaras in Multi-Ethnic Leicester**

Early pioneers of Sikh migration to Britain arrived in the first part of the twentieth century; many were former seamen and worked as peddlers, and they belonged largely to the Bhatra caste. In the 1950s, Sikhs, like other immigrant groups, moved to Britain in response to the growing demand for labour, and many of these were from the Jat caste. They were followed in the 1960s and early 1970s by Sikhs from East Africa, and later, following the attack on the Golden Temple Complex at Amritsar by the Indian army and the assassination of the Indian Prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, by Sikhs escaping troubles in the Punjab.<sup>20</sup> Britain has the largest Sikh population of any country other than India. According to the 2001 census, there are ten British cities with over 10,000 Sikhs, Leicester ranking eighth among them.<sup>21</sup>

Sikhs started to live in Leicester after World War Two. They came from the Punjab region (Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Amritsar) and from East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). Smaller numbers came from Indonesia,

Singapore and Malaysia.<sup>22</sup> These groups came to Leicester in four phases.

The first phase was after World War Two to about 1962 when the Commonwealth Immigration Act was introduced, and when European, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian immigrants, including a small number of Punjabi Sikhs, came seeking employment and settled in Leicester. They found work in foundries and in rubber, hosiery, dying and other industries. They lived in so-called 'inner-city' areas (for example, Highfields and Belgrave) in low-cost terraced housing for single men, working long hours as non-skilled or semi-skilled factory labourers/operators, and saving wages to send home. In those days they endured a great deal of racism when they sought accommodation and jobs, at work and in the street. However, they had the support of friends and relatives who had come to Britain before them, and gradually managed to establish a community and a Sikh religious congregation.<sup>23</sup> Satnam told me about his experience after coming to Leicester in 1959 as follows:

[My first job] was [in] an elastic firm. [I worked there for] about 6/7 months [After then I] found a job in a foundry [and] worked there for nearly a year. [It was a] 12 hour shift - about 72 hours work for £12, and very, very hard and dirty. So I [gave] up the job and [hunted] for another job, something a bit cleaner

[...] I found a job in a textile factory [...] I got on the night shift at £8 per week 4 nights, so it wasn't dirty [...] The main problem was for lodging [...] We [couldn't] get lodging in English people's houses. We [tried] to find old premises. If anyone has got a house and could move there, all people [lived] together. It [was] crowded, very crowded.<sup>24</sup>

The second phase was from around 1962 until about 1970 when the economic base for the community was established. Sikhs then bought houses, brought their wives and children, recommenced family life, and gradually formed a Sikh community. The traditional culture of the 'homeland' was restored, and soon afterwards the first Sikh temple 'Guru Nanak Gurdwara' (hereafter GNG) was opened in 1968. During that period more Sikhs came to Leicester from the Punjab. In addition, Sikhs came from East Africa during the 'Independence of Africa' movement of the 1960s. Again, there was severe racism. For example, wearing a turban and having a beard could often be a pretext for refusing a Sikh a job.<sup>25</sup> Manjit told me about the racism which he experienced in 1964:

In the beginning I couldn't get a job because I couldn't cut my hair or cut my beard [...] I went everywhere looking for a job [...] But I was told they couldn't keep me. They said you must shave it off. I said no, I don't want to shave it off. I wrote to my father back home and told him what was happening. My father told me to come back. Don't shave! Come back! Then I got a job at Dunlop [the rubber factory], and they didn't ask me to shave. The person

in charge there had lived in India, so he knew the Sikhs' background.<sup>26</sup>

The third phase was from the 1970s till early 1980s, when a large number of immigrants from South Asia, including Sikhs, arrived from India and East Africa. According to Deborah Phillips, there were 42,000 South Asian immigrants by 1978, 19,500 of them East African, the so-called 'twice migrants'. For example, political refugees from Uganda under the Idi Amin regime, numbered around 27,000 in Britain, over 6,000 of them in Leicester. Some had owned businesses in Africa, and after arriving in Leicester they established a new business and stimulated activity among other immigrants already settled in the city. They started to leave the inner-city and to buy houses in more up-market areas in search of a higher living standards and more educational opportunities. The second generation obtained more lucrative employment than the first, and started to climb the social ladder.<sup>27</sup>

Satnam told me about the South Asians from East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They were mostly business people. They set up business on the Melton Road like [for example] a small Bombay Bazaar [...] Some people started manufacturing clothing [...] They developed and gave jobs to Asian women who couldn't speak English [and who wanted] jobs in Asian firms [...] A lot of big firms were closing down because of the recession. A lot of the Asian families survived because they worked in small factories and the Asian women worked hard to earn some money and develop. In that way they were able to [...] buy bigger houses. The children had a quite good education, and became doctors, dentists [and] solicitors.<sup>28</sup>

More Sikhs came at this time, and according to the local census from 1983, there were 10,808 Sikhs (3.8 per cent of the population) in Leicester. Under these circumstances three more Sikh temples were opened: the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara (hereafter RBG) in 1971, the Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara (hereafter GTBG) in 1975, and the Nirankari Advice Centre (hereafter NAC) in 1979 (this temple is not referred to as a 'Gurdwara'). These developments became the base of the Sikh Community in Leicester.<sup>29</sup>

The last phase was from the early 1980s to the present when five more Sikh temples were built, and the Sikh communities have further developed around these temples: the Guru Amar Das Gurdwara (hereafter GADG) in 1992, the Shri Guru Ravidas Temple (hereafter SGRT) in 1993, the Gurdwara Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib (hereafter GSGDS) in 1998, the Guru Panth Parkash Gurdwara (hereafter GPPG) in 2005 and the Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester (hereafter NSSL) in 2008.<sup>30</sup> The political incidents in India in 1984 and their aftermath had a great impact on the Sikh community in Leicester and mobilised Sikhs into action. Meanwhile, as Leicester's policy of multiculturalism progressed, Sikh festivals such as Vaisakhi (marking the

birth of the Khalsa in 1699) and Guru Nanak's birthday along with its procession started to gain popularity beyond the Sikh community,<sup>31</sup> and some Sikhs began to get involved with local and national politics. This led to some Sikhs being elected to the City Council, rising to the office of Lord Mayor for Leicester and later as Members of Parliament.<sup>32</sup>

Culdipp, who came to Britain in 1959, told me why he became involved in politics:

During the 1980s a movement [the Black Action Group, was popular and] a lot of things were going on like fighting for the minority groups [...] They were part of the Labour Party in those days [...] They organised themselves to put some pressure on the political parties [...] They wanted political rights, [a] share of the power, whatever that was. I thought that there was no point in shouting from outside; you have to join the party and then make a noise, argue [and] sit with them. Any political change should come from there for the benefit of the people. That was my basic reason for joining the Labour Party and becoming a councillor [...] My ward was Rushey Mead [...] Labour took that ward in 1983 for the first time and we have held it since then.<sup>33</sup>

He became the Lord Mayor of Leicester in 1997. He was the second Asian Lord Mayor in the city, and the first Sikh.<sup>34</sup>

Thus Sikh temples in Leicester are not only places to nurture Sikh identity, but they clearly contribute to Leicester's success as a multi-ethnic city, and to the drive to make Britain a multi-ethnic, multi-faith nation. One of the most symbolic events in their progress was the visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth to the GNG, in August 2002 as part of her Golden Jubilee Tour. The Sikhs welcomed the Queen by waving both the Union Jack and the Sikh flag, and presented her with a 'golden sword' in gratitude for her visit to the temple. It was the first time the Queen had visited a Sikh temple in Britain.<sup>35</sup>

The role of the Gurdwara is not limited to religious activities. Each temple provides a venue for educational, cultural, political and other activities, and they have extended buildings and expanded their role within the communities as congregations have increased in size. The typical Gurdwara contains a 'diwan hall' (chapel) which houses the 'Guru Granth Sahib' (the Holy Book), and which serves as a venue for festivals and weddings, a 'langar hall' (for dining), a Punjabi school, and social services facilities for the elderly and disabled. Some temples house Sikh museums, libraries, sports venues, music and dance clubs, yoga classes, marriage registry offices, and branches of the 'Shromani Akali Dal' (the main Sikh party of Punjab).<sup>36</sup>

The Gurdwaras are by no means identical, each one reflecting its individual community. Although they have been developed by Sikhs living in British society, their congregations have been deeply influenced by the Punjabi homeland and its traditional caste system, by Sikh sects, personal rivalries, political incidents, and experiences in East Africa. Of nine

Gurdwaras in Leicester, the GNG, the GTBG, the GADG and the GSGDS are mainly Jats, while the first president of the GTBG was a Rajput. However, two of them, the GADG and the GSGDS, started their congregations after the political incidents in the Punjab in 1984, as a consequence of differences in political outlook and personal rivalries. The RBG is for Ramgarhias and the SGRT is for Ravidassias. The other three places of worship (the NAC, the GPPG and the NSSL), to be discussed in another paper, worship '*Sants*' who are still alive (as in living human gurus). However, one of the strongest influences on Sikh internal division comes from the sense of belonging to the caste system. This paper focuses on this point.<sup>37</sup>

### Early Divisions among Jats and Rajputs

Interviewees from the Jat and Ravidassia communities told me that, around 1959, two Jat men who worked in the John Bull rubber factory initiated the purchase of a small terraced house in Gwendolen Road, to use for meetings and Sunday worship. Later, they planned to turn the house into a Sikh temple, but they could not obtain council permission. By 1962, about 100 Sikhs lived in Leicester.<sup>38</sup> In 1966, the Sikh community rented St Saviour's Church Hall in Highfields, a residential area favoured by immigrants, and they held Sunday worship and established a Punjabi school there. There were about 200 members in this congregation, taking in most of the Sikhs resident in Leicester. While the majority were Jats, Sikhs from other caste backgrounds (Rajputs, Ramgarhias and Ravidassias) also joined the early congregation.<sup>39</sup>

In the late 1960s, politically-fuelled rifts began to develop among the St Saviour's Church Hall Sikhs. This conflict concerned issues of caste partisanship brought from the homeland, issues around the extended family, Gurdwara management, political outlook and different views regarding the Sikh faith and its ceremonies.<sup>40</sup> People not elected to the management committee of the first Gurdwara decided to withdraw and establish their own congregation.<sup>41</sup>

Those who were elected to the management opened the first Sikh temple in Leicester, the GNG, in 1968, after having purchased the former Holy Cross School in New Walk in 1966.<sup>42</sup> The first president of this temple was a Jat named Gurmit. According to a relative of his, he arrived in Britain in about 1951 from Hoshiarpur and worked in the W Richards Structural Steel foundry. As more Indian workers started working in the same foundry, he became a shop steward, a rare thing for an immigrant in those days. Because of his status, he managed to obtain work vouchers for people from his village with his extended family, and they came to work in the foundry. He helped them and lodged them in his home.<sup>43</sup> His relative described how he created a wider Sikh network:

[He] kept our [extended] family together and led everything [...] He could communicate in various languages. He was a good administrator. He knew all the rules and regulations of this particular country, and because he was a helpful person everyone



used to go to him for help. He was always seen not only as a community leader, but as a family leader also.<sup>44</sup>

Gurmit was the President of the GNG for 10 years from 1968, but died at the age of 52 in 1984.<sup>45</sup> The Sikhs worshipped in the GNG from 1968 to 1989, when parking problems and a growing congregation prompted them to consider moving. They purchased a warehouse in Holy Bones and rebuilt it as a Sikh temple, opening in 1989.<sup>46</sup>

I will now consider the activities of the Sikhs who split away from the original temple. According to the individuals involved, their congregation started with 5-6 people, in the main hall of Bridge Road School. In 1975 the group purchased a former builder's yard at 23 East Park Road, and it was named the 'GTBG'. In 1985, they purchased a former electricity sub-station next door (106 East Park Road) and extended the temple. The congregation sold this temple and purchased a four-storey building nearby, on the site of the former Chilprufe Shoe factory. They redeveloped this as a new Sikh temple and community centre, which opened in 1989.<sup>47</sup>

The first President of this temple (1968-1978), was Arjan, from Jalanadhar. His father was a British soldier. Before emigrating to Britain he studied at Khalsa College, and then worked as an army wireless operator for seven years. He came to Britain in 1962, settled in Leicester, bought a house and then two years later called his family over. He worked at the Dunlop factory for twenty-one years. By 1984, when he retired, the number of Sikhs in the factory had increased to between 200 and 300.<sup>48</sup> His education at Khalsa College and his knowledge of Sikh teaching and ceremonial practices led other Sikhs to depend on him for help, guidance and support. He also developed a new Sikh network through the workplace, extended family and Sikh community surrounding him.

Let us now consider why the Sikh congregation divided in the 1966-68 period. Most of these conflicts were among Jats, who formed the majority of the congregation, but one additional factor in the conflict was the fact that the first president, Arjan, was a Rajput with a strong sense of caste status. One Rajput remarked:

Our family is a Rajput family [...] we are a small group of people, and a lot of people didn't like the idea of [a Rajput] being President.<sup>49</sup>

In India the Rajputs are in the minority; of the 29 castes of Sikhs mentioned in the 1931 Indian National Census, the percentage of Jats amounted to 52.43 per cent as compared to the 1.25 per cent who were Rajputs. In the Hindu caste system, Rajputs are regarded as superior to Jats. However, under the Sikh Empire (1839-49), many Rajputs converted to Sikhism, where they came to be regarded as inferior to the Jats.<sup>50</sup> A Rajput woman related the history of the Rajputs as follows:

The Rajputs were above the Jats [...] They were part of the Maharajahs and were the main landowners. They had vast amounts of land and covered so many villages. The Jats used to work for the Rajputs. The Rajputs were the warrior clans. They had the power in their hands. In most villages they had a caste system.<sup>51</sup>

Her sense of belonging and identity as a Rajput was reconstructed from the 'past glory' of the Rajput caste who presided over the Jats and as a 'ruling, large landowning and warrior' caste in a 'certain period in history', and she attempted to insist on Rajput superiority over the Jats on this basis, while being aware of the status of the Jats in modern society. What is relevant to the present debate, however, is that caste consciousness between Jats and Rajputs was one of the initial causes of division in the community.

The Rajputs remain a small minority, with a few hundred families in the UK and fewer than ten in Leicester. Some of their arranged marriages are organized by the parents and relatives within the same caste, but rather than establishing their own new Sikh temple officially, they attend the same Gurdwaras as Jats, and sometimes marry Jats. But about 200 Rajput families mainly from the Punjab region live in Hitchen, Hertfordshire, which has the only predominantly Rajput Gurdwara in the UK. Rajputs, who came to Hitchen in the 1960s and subsequently became the majority of Sikhs in the area, opened their Gurdwara with other Sikhs (Jats and Ramgarhias, and so on) in 1970. After that, Jats left this Gurdwara and opened their own Gurdwara in 1976. Ramgarhias also left the Rajput-dominated Gurdwaras and established their own Gurdwara in 1993. While some of Rajputs from the Punjab region are Hindu, the majority of them are Sikhs in the UK.<sup>52</sup>

Gurdwaras established by the majority Jat community gradually started to proliferate in a number of cities in Britain. But it did not always mean that there was any formal network between Gurdwaras. In this respect, the Jats differed from the Ramgarhias and the Ravidassias, whom I will discuss later. The reasons for this are varied: because of the large number of Jat Sikhs in each of the UK cities, worshippers had no need to rely on the Sikhs from different cities, and there was a strong sense of autonomy in each Gurdwara. As the Jats represented the majority of the Sikh population, they had an advantage over Sikhs belonging to other castes in that they did not need to emphasise their solidarity as much. The GNG and the GTBG followed the same pattern. However, they started to alter in character, as did the majority of Gurdwaras in other cities in Britain, after the political disaster in the Punjab in 1984. They became part of a new national and global Sikh network, led by the Khalistanis who campaigned for an independent Punjab, mainly through the International Sikh Youth Federation [hereafter ISYF] (banned in 2001), and its UK successor, the Sikh Federation, founded in September 2003.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, Sikhs who joined the protest against the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar but who opposed the Khalistan movement for the creation of a Sikh State, were defeated by the ISYF at the GTBG elections in November 1986, and left to open the GADG on Clarendon Park Road in 1992 in a former

Baptist Church. The main management committee members of the GADG were the former managers including the first president from the GTBG.<sup>54</sup> Another Sikh congregation was started in Halkin Street, Belgrave, in about 1996 by two businessmen. Later they opened the new GSGDS on Gipsy Lane in 1998, in the former Gipsy Lane Hotel. In 2002 the management committee members changed, and a well-known Khalistani became a president of the GSGDS.<sup>55</sup> In short, while the main committee members of the GNG, the GTBG and the GSGDS have been Khalistani Jats, those from the GADG have been non-Khalistani Jats. While some Rajputs remained at the GTBG, other Rajputs left and joined the GADG.<sup>56</sup>

Jats whom I interviewed denied the caste system's existence, but in reality they have cherished a consciousness of their 'superior' Jat caste, just as in the village communities of the Punjab, and by discriminating against the other Sikh groups, whom I will discuss later. This has enabled them to maintain their sense of belonging to a ruling caste, even though there are also conflicts present within their caste.<sup>57</sup> However, one must remember the fact that Sikhs who belong to the other castes have created their own sense of 'memory' and built up a 'story' of their development as a community reconstructing their own identity and emphasizing their difference from the Jats. The Rajputs, in turn, have created their own 'memory' and 'story' around the 'past glory' of the Rajput caste in a 'certain period in history' in the Punjab.

### **Divisions between Ramgarhias and Jats and their Historical Background**

The name 'Ramgarhia' is derived from 'Ramgarh', a village near Amritsar, and it means 'Custodians of the Castle of God'. While 'Ramgarhia' was historically the title of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, the leader of one of the twelve Sikh misls (confederacies) of the eighteenth century, it has become synonymous with the Tarkhan (carpenter) caste because the majority of the Sikhs within the Ramgarhia misl were Tarkhans. Ramgarhias are descended from village craftsmen (carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers and others) and in the Punjab they served the Jats and were regarded as a lower caste.<sup>58</sup> The Ramgarhias worshipped with the Jats at the GNG until 1968, when they set up their own management committee and rented a room in a pub in London Road. Around 1970, they purchased a warehouse in Meynell Road, and started to rebuild it as a Sikh temple, the RBG, in about 1971.<sup>59</sup> A businessman from Nairobi was one of the four founding trustees, and was responsible for building the Gurdwara.<sup>60</sup>

An important issue is why the Ramgarhias separated themselves from the Jats. The reason, according to one Jat man involved with the management of the GNG, is as follows:

Our religion does not believe in the caste system. We all sit on the floor and we all meet in the main prayer hall or in the main langar hall. Preaching is for everybody [...] but unfortunately the Ramgarhia Board [Gurdwara] is based on the caste system which is against the principles of Sikhism.<sup>61</sup>

Clearly, from the Jats' point of view, the reason the Ramgarhias split from the Jats communities lay in their sense of belonging to the Ramgarhia caste. However, by condemning the Ramgarhias for going against the spirit of Sikhism, the Jats also distance themselves from the Ramgarhias, seeking to maintain their own identity as distinct from the Ramgarhias. Some Jats when I interviewed repeated the phrase 'equality among all Sikhs', but do not acknowledge that one of the main reasons the Ramgarhias cite for choosing to rely on their own caste is the behaviour of the Jats themselves. The Ramgarhia community alleges that the 'equality among all Sikhs' mantra often reiterated by the Jats is only a 'principle', and that they in fact observe the caste traditions which still exist in the Punjab. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of marriages arranged by Jats are within the Jat caste. A Ramgarhia on the former management committee of this temple remarked that:

[Jats] don't like other communities [...] They are the farmers in India and they think they are super[ior], and they are a strong nation. They like fighting. They like the army and they can challenge anybody in the congregation [...] They want to be honoured and they want to humiliate the others [...] In the nation of the Ramgarhia they are soft people. They don't go in for fighting [...] They [Jats] feel the Jat caste is the top caste, and the Ramgarhia caste is a bit inferior, so they don't elect them to be President. That was the main cause of the split. They did not accept the Presidency of the Ramgarhia people, and the Ramgarhia said, 'First President yours and then one from our caste and nation, then from your nation' and they said 'no'. 'We will always be President and you will be either secretary or treasurer'. They always clashed and that was the main cause.<sup>62</sup>

From this it emerges that the main reason the Ramgarhias split from the Jats was the difference in caste. However, Ramgarhias and Jats differ in their assessment of who was to blame.

In regard to the division of these Ramgarhias from the Jats, it is necessary to call attention to two issues in the context of the historical background. One is the fact the Ramgarhias were 'twice migrants'. In other words, many Ramgarhias came to Britain via East Africa rather than straight from India. This experience caused some complicated antagonisms with the Jats. In the farming communities in the Punjab, Ramgarhias always worked under the Jats. However, from the late nineteenth century the Punjabi Tarkhans moved from the villages to towns and, under the extension of British rule in the Punjab, they acquired a reputation for remarkable skill from the British railway authorities. During these times, they began to have their own Ramgarhia identity which is connected to these skills. Furthermore, some Ramgarhias migrated to East Africa to work in construction industries. It is said they represented ninety per cent of the Sikh population in these countries, and that they received a British-style education, spoke fluent English and experienced an urban lifestyle. Some

had successful businesses. They were no longer attached to their Jat patrons and acquired a new economic power and independence which enhanced their pride in the Ramgarhia identity. However, during the movements for African independence and the 'Africanisation' policies of the 1960s and early 1970s, they moved abroad with other south Asian migrants. As some of them held British passports, a good number emigrated to Britain.<sup>63</sup>

Once they landed in Britain, they found a large number of Jats already there. The Jats spoke little English, and in general were less well off than the Ramgarhias. However, the Jat majority still had pride in the Jat caste. Consequently, complex feelings of conflict caused tension between the two groups. A Ramgarhia member described the relationship with the Jats thus:

Jat people coming from India had a lot of communal problems [...] They thought that Ramgarhia was a lower caste than Jat, but we say that because we are better educated and moving into modern society how can we be a low caste? How could they be of a higher caste when they were illiterate?<sup>64</sup>

A second generation Ramgarhia man remarked on the relationship with the Jats from the Ramgarhia point of view as follows:

Ramgarhias are more respectful to their elders [...] We speak what could be termed as being more gentle whereas the Jats because of their background, where they work in the fields, are used to shouting and ordering each other about rather than asking [...] I think the Jats are more the followers with the Ramgarhias being the leaders [...] Because we are more skilled and educated we do have an advantage in the knowledge we have, so they sometimes feel let down by that. There is an inferiority complex [...] There is no intermarriage between the two.<sup>65</sup>

What I find interesting from these stories is that, while these Ramgarhias are sensitive towards 'discrimination' from the Jats, they partly derive their identity from their consciousness of their status as relatively prosperous, skilled, urban settlers in East Africa, and stress their differences from the Jats who are the predominantly working class. In other words, while they identify themselves as Ramgarhia, they have also created a new idea of the Ramgarhia as superior. They turn traditional discrimination back upon the Jats by accusing them of being rural, fond of fighting, unrefined, arrogant, and uneducated and of not respecting the elderly. This is compared adversely to the Ramgarhias, who have urban life experiences, are not fond of fighting, respect the elderly, are educated within the British culture, and who behave with moderation. While this process has been referred to as 'pursuing a Sikh version of Sankritisation' (a form of upward mobility by a social lower caste which emphasizes religious virtue), it leads to the classification of Ramgarhias as more 'Westernised', 'cultured', and

‘educated’ than the Jats, despite their conservatism in following the rules of Sikh orthodoxy.<sup>66</sup>

It also seems that the Ramgarhias did not mix with the Jats, and that after the 1950s they developed their own community and steadily strengthened their own sense of unity. The Ramgarhias in Leeds opened their own Gurdwara as early as 1958. Ramgarhia congregations were also established in many UK cities. In 1973, the National Ramgarhia Congress was held in the Ramgarhia Sabha Gurdwara in Southall, at which representatives of twenty-two Ramgarhia Associations and Gurdwaras met and founded the Ramgarhia Council. National and regional events and celebrations organized by the Council and the Associations have become a place to exchange information, traditionally-arranged endogamous marriages and strengthen Ramgarhia networks. Recently they also set up a website providing information and support for arranged marriages.<sup>67</sup> Ramgarhia religious facilities have also been built not only in India but also in the US, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, the Middle East, Africa and other overseas locations. Thus, the RBG in Leicester has served not only as a temple in a nationwide network, but also functions as part of the global network.<sup>68</sup> Though part of the RBG became involved in demonstrations against the Indian government for a while after 1984, they still maintain a strong sense of identity.<sup>69</sup>

The Ramgarhias have created a new identity based on ideas of ‘civilized’ versus ‘uncivilized’ derived from Western imperialist values which they absorbed during their urban experiences in Africa, a process which occurred despite their religious conservatism. They have used this conceptual framework to assert their superiority over the Jats. Thus, whilst restrained by the concept of the caste, they have reconstructed their identity by making reference to their experiences ‘in Britain via East Africa’. When Bhachu discusses ‘twice migrants’, she speaks of all Sikhs from East Africa, emphasising they being ‘East African Sikhs’, rather than designating them in terms of caste. But in my view, it is quite natural for those Sikhs who came to Britain via East Africa to speak of their communities through the perspective of caste.<sup>70</sup>

### **The Division of the Ravidassi group from Other Sikh Communities and ‘Caste Exclusionism’**

Another group of Leicester Sikhs, those from the caste associated with skinning and tanning, regard Ravidass (a *bhagat* in the Sikh tradition), as their ‘Guru’. They separated themselves from the GNG in about 1969. There were about ten members initially. They rented a room in Highfields Community Centre, and worshipped once a month there. They also tried to purchase two houses in Vulcan Road in 1984, but they were unable to do so due to opposition from local residents. However they successfully purchased land in Harrison Road, now an Indian residential district in the Belgrave area of Leicester, and opened a new Sikh temple in 1993.<sup>71</sup> That year was the 600th Anniversary of the birth of their Guru, Ravidass.

One Ravidassia, reflecting on the late 1960s, talked about community division:

There was another friction between our community and other people, and they started another group which is [the Shri] Guru Ravidass Temple [...] We formed a little committee and hired [a] community hall.<sup>72</sup>

He explained the reasons for separation thus:

I am a member of the Shri Guru Ravidass Temple in Leicester [...] We had so many castes in India a long time ago that keeps it running as it does. We were in the lower caste, and our Guru Ravidass was from the lower caste also [...] People would say, 'We are in the higher caste' and things like that. That is why there were so many frictions in life.<sup>73</sup>

Another Ravidasi told me:

My parents [experienced discrimination]. Some older members would say, 'Are you from the Ravidasi community?' They would ask questions like that and discriminate against us. [My parents] wouldn't tolerate that so they thought 'rather than staying with this community and being discriminated against, we set [up on] our own. We will go away from these people and have our own society and [rather than] stay in that society to eliminate the discrimination'.<sup>74</sup>

After arriving in Britain, the Ravidassias were often discriminated against both by the host society and by fellow Sikhs (in particular Jats) because of their caste. There were often fights and quarrels in factories and pubs between the Jats and Chamars sometimes even resulting in murder.<sup>75</sup> Even when the Ravidassias succeeded in economic life and in politics, Jats continued to judge according to caste. The Ravidassias had no choice but to separate themselves from those who had a strong sense of caste, and to form their own Ravidassia organization.

In order to explain how the Ravidassias organize their group, it is necessary to mention the Guru Ravidas and Ad Dharm movement in India and Britain. The Ravidassias are 'Chamars', or so-called 'untouchables': those who have traditionally been at the bottom of the society, outside the Indian caste system. They were in the category of 'scheduled castes' up to 1935, and were also known as 'Ad-Dharm', 'Harijan', 'Achhut', 'Dalit' and 'Ravidassi'.<sup>76</sup>

The development of a new 'Ravidassi' identity is closely related to the tradition of Guru Ravidass, poet and thinker, who was born into the Chamar caste in the fifteenth century. He worked in the leather industry as a shoemaker, but because of his caste he faced significant discrimination. Later, he criticised all discrimination on grounds of caste, class, race and religion, and preached the equality of all humankind. In the 1920s, a religious movement called 'Ad-

Dharam' or 'Ravidassi' developed, which emphasised the equality of all humankind and took Guru Ravidas as its patron saint.<sup>77</sup>

This movement spread to Britain in 1956, at the time when the Chamars were experiencing problems of caste discrimination within the Sikh community. Initially it was adopted by the Ravidas Sabha congregations in Birmingham and Wolverhampton. The first Ravidassia Gurdwara was opened in Birmingham in 1966, the second in Wolverhampton in 1968. This was a stimulus to the Chamars in Britain, and it encouraged the foundation of Ravidassia congregations in other cities.<sup>78</sup> At present, there are over twenty Ravidassia Gurdwaras in Britain. They have a national organization, with its headquarters in the Gurdwara in Birmingham, as well as being connected to overseas Sikh centres of worship.<sup>79</sup>

A Ravidassia group member told me about the relationship between the Ravidassia Gurdwara and the committees of other Leicester Gurdwaras:

There are some who hardly get involved [...] whose members hardly ever come here. We do go to other temples [...] Their management members don't participate [...] The public will come, but not management members [...] It is still the caste system which they have in mind.<sup>80</sup>

The same man told me why members were confined to the Ravidassia community:

Being low caste people, people of a higher caste think we can't get married to them, because they are lower [...] There is a difference in [the] caste system in England but it is still going on, and it is still annoying [...] We want to get away from this, but people won't let it go. They come to the Gurdwaras and sit and pray and take part in their religious ceremonies, but the caste system in their minds is still there. You therefore have to stay in your community.<sup>81</sup>

This discrimination is unique to their historical situation. A Ramgarhia made the following remark about the divide between the Ravidassias and the other castes:

Historically in India [Ravidassias] did the dirtiest jobs [...] cleaning the toilets, skinning the animals and this type of thing, so the higher castes did not associate with them. Whilst in practice now things are different, [...] people don't do those kinds of job now but the practice of the caste system is still there. [...] The younger people are changing [...] They don't feel so strongly about it, but certainly in the older generation it is very strong [...] Among my relatives a girl got married to a Chamar boy [...] but it was not accepted.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, as victims of 'racial exclusionism' stemming from the host community and also 'caste exclusionism' from within the Sikh communities, Ravidassias



have been made to feel a sense of 'otherness' in multiple contexts, and their social cohesiveness seems to arise from their fight against discrimination.<sup>83</sup>

The situation of Ravidassias, at the bottom of the caste system, is largely different from that of Rajputs and Ramgarhias (the Chuhra caste is traditionally regarded as 'lower', but apparently not present in Leicester). Because of their history as 'untouchables' labeled as the 'unclean', 'big gaps' have formed between them and the Jats, Rajputs and Ramgarhias. Because of this prejudice, they have chosen to follow the holy man Ravidass, who opposed the caste system. As a result, they have developed their own community and have been active in the movement to end the discrimination which has led to their 'double exclusion' or 'two-fold isolation'. Nonetheless, one might argue that this sense of cohesiveness has led to them 'closing' themselves in by marriage within the caste, a practice that has given rise to yet another dilemma.<sup>84</sup>

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed how caste influenced the divisions between the four Gurdwaras in Leicester. The conclusion is that caste consciousness between Jats, Rajputs, Ramgarhias and Ravidassias had a great influence on the divisions, groupings and classifications of Sikh communities centred around the Gurdwaras. My research in Leicester also identifies two wider issues: caste-consciousness and the growing significance of national and global Sikh networks.

Caste-consciousness, which has changed in complex ways during the history of the Sikh diaspora, has continued to cause strife even among Sikhs living in the West. Sikhs have mixed with British society and found a place in the British social and economic system. Superficially they seem to resist traditional hierarchical distinctions, but in reality they have used caste as their standard method of classifying individuals in society. Caste-consciousness is not limited to the first generation, but continues into the second generation and beyond. It is not always obvious to the casual observer, but it surfaces when one individual meets someone from the same Indian ethnic or religious community but from a different caste, or in matters pertaining to marriage and the extended family. This caste-consciousness is unlikely to disappear even when someone who belongs to a lower caste has achieved economic success, particularly when that person is labeled as 'Chamar'. The main factor in the shaping of each Sikh community and its Gurdwara is not the presence of class-based networks but caste-based ones, even though the Sikh community consists of Sikhs from different kinds of social class.<sup>85</sup> Today caste remains a vitally important aspect of the British Sikh Community.

A Sikh who came to Leicester in 1964 when he was about eight years old told me why he uses Singh ('lion', the name taken by all male Sikhs) as a surname.

What happens is that I call myself Mahesher Singh. That states that I don't have a caste. We are all the same we are all called Singh. A lot of

people now use Singh as a middle name and they use their caste name to identify themselves. A lot of them even take out the Singh and are called [by their full names]. That donates their caste. To me as child I didn't know what caste was. It was only later on when I was asked what caste I was [...] The older people know these castes and it is very important to them.<sup>86</sup>

He explained how caste consciousness was ingrained in people's minds:

A lot of Asian people came here twenty, thirty [and] forty years ago. They remember what [the caste system] was like. All these ideas about position in society are ingrained in their minds [The problems] come when it is time for their children to get married. That is where a lot of difficulty arises because they want their children to marry within their own communities [...] Some of the children run away saying they will not marry this person or that person. So there is a lot of tension [in families] like that. I think this persists although we are not supposed to have a caste system, it is very much a caste system [...] Even the Gurdwara is based on the caste system although we would preach one thing and do something else. Everybody does that.<sup>87</sup>

Another point is the relationship between the structure and organisation of each group and the national and global Sikh network. Divisions between Sikhs are based on a sense of being 'trapped' in the caste system, and this has given rise to discrimination and a consciousness of hierarchy between groups and organisations. It has happened not only in Leicester, but also among other immigrant communities who belong to the same caste in other parts of Britain, as research done in Leeds, Bradford and Southall has suggested.<sup>88</sup> But it seems to me it has also happened within the worldwide Sikh diaspora. If I am right, the development of the Gurdwaras in Leicester cannot be understood fully without a consideration of the development of global south Asian networks, in particular, Indian networks with their extended kinship ties.<sup>89</sup>

Finally I would like to mention briefly the problem of caste discrimination, which I referred to in the Introduction. As discussed in this article, the problem associated with caste discrimination does not only exist in the relationship between a 'Chamar' and other upper castes. However, one must not forget the fact there is a subtle difference in quality in the relationships between other castes, and the above mentioned relationship. Their experience and suffering of caste discrimination (and the fact that those who have not experienced caste prejudice are seemingly in denial) have driven them to a movement whose aim is 'eradication' (or 'abolition') of caste discrimination. From this point of view, it is utterly a natural/rightful development to see the emergence of organizations such as 'the Dalit Solidarity Network UK' and 'the CasteWatch UK'.<sup>90</sup> We ought to listen to their demands to 'oppose all caste-based discrimination', and their bitter experiences and 'voices'. These are not made lightly.

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### Map: The Gurdwaras in Leicester

1. The Guru Nanak Gurdwara
2. The Ramghria Board Gurdwara
3. The Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara
4. The Nirankari Advice Centre
5. The Guru Amar Das Gurdwara
6. The Shri Guru Ravidass Temple
7. The Gurdwara Shri Guru Dasmesh Sahib
8. The Gur Panth Parkash Gurdwara
9. The Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester

[Gurdwaras are identified with number in circle]



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**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> *The Guardian*, 1 January, 2001; *Leicester Mercury* (hereafter, *LM*), 6 January, 2001; *International Herald Tribune*, 10-11 February, 2001; *The Independent*, 12 December, 2001; Gurharpal Singh, 'A City of Surprise: Urban Multiculturalism and the "Leicester Model"', in N Ali, V S Kalra and S Sayyid (eds), *A Postcolonial People*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> The purpose of this project was to research the history and culture in the multi-ethnic Leicester from the point of view of different ethnic minorities.
- <sup>3</sup> Nick Jewson(ed), *Migration Processes & Ethnic Divisions*, Leicester: The Centre for Urban History and the Ethnicity Research Centre, University of Leicester, 1995; *The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile*, Leicester City Council, May 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/departments/page.asp?pgid=1009> (accessed: 31 July 2003); Valerie Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989; John Martin and Gurharpal Singh, *Asian Leicester*, (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2002); *LM.*, 2 September 2003; Gurharpal Singh (2006); Joanna Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries in the City*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
- <sup>5</sup> See note 3 and Panikos Panayi, 'The Spicing Up of English Provincial Life', in Anne J Kershen (ed.), *Food in the Migrant Experience*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Eleanor Nesbitt, 'Sikh Diversity in the UK: Contexts and Evolution', forthcoming.
- <sup>6</sup> *No Escape: Caste Discrimination in the UK*, Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2006 (<http://www.irr.org.uk/2006/july/haoooo13.html>) (accessed: 26 September 2009); [http://www.acdauk.org.uk/?page\\_id=24](http://www.acdauk.org.uk/?page_id=24) (accessed: 10 April 2010); *Hidden Apartheid*, Derby, November, 2009. <http://www.Equalities.gov.uk/equalitybill.aspx> (accessed: 7 May 2010).
- <sup>7</sup> [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap20090525/ap\\_on-re\\_eu/eu\\_austria\\_temple\\_shooting](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap20090525/ap_on-re_eu/eu_austria_temple_shooting); <http://www.demotix.com/news/sikhs-march-london-against-discrimination> (accessed: 26 September 2009); As for Ravidassia community in Catalonia, Kathryn Lum, 'The Ravidassia Community and Identity(IES) in Catalonia, Spain', *Sikh Formations*, 6:1, June 2010. pp 31-49. Regarding to the impact of 'Vienna incident' on UK Sikhs, a future study will be needed.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=293>(accessed: 31 July 2003); <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/rank/ewskh.asp> (accessed: 7 February 2004).
- <sup>9</sup> According to Paul Weller (ed), *Religions in the UK 2001-03* (Pontyool: the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby, 2001, p 36), there were 180 centres in 1999. However, there are some Sikh temples which are not counted in this book, and the number has increased considerably since 1999. <http://www.sikh.net/Gurdwara/World/GWUK.htm> (accessed: 26 September

2009).

<sup>10</sup> Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, 'Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England', *The Geographical Review*, vol 93, no 4, 2003; Singh and Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain*, (London: Zed Books, 2006), pp. 5, 69 93; Nesbitt, 'Gurdwaras in the British Press', *Sikh Bulletin*, 2, 1985; Manvir Singh Dhesi, *An Ethnographic Study of the Concept and Development of the Gurdwara in the UK*, Unpublished M Ph thesis, University of Birmingham, September 2009.

<sup>11</sup> The main research has been done by: Roger Ballard & Catherine Ballard, 'The Sikhs: The Development of South Asian Settlements in Britain', in James L Watson (ed), *Between Two Cultures*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977); Ramindar Singh, *The Sikh Community in Bradford*, (Bradford: Bradford College, 1978); Arthur W Helweg, *Sikhs in England*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979); Nesbitt, *Aspects of Sikh Tradition in Nottingham*, Unpublished M Phil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1980 ; Parminder Bhachu, *Twice Migrants*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985); ditto., 'The East African Sikh Diaspora', in N G Barrier and VA Dusenbery (eds), *The Sikh Diaspora*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989); Sewa S Kalsi, *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain*, (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1992); Roger Ballard, 'Differentiation and Disjunction among the Sikhs' and Nesbitt, 'Valmiki in Coventry', in R Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh*, (London: Hurst & Company, 1994); P A S Ghuman, 'Bhatra Sikhs in Cardiff', *New Community*, vol 8, no 3, 1980; Tatla D., *The Sikh Diaspora*, (London: UCL Press, 1999); Terence Thomas, 'Old allies, new neighbours: Sikhs in Britain', in Gerald Parsons (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity*, vol.1, (London: Routledge, 1993); Kathleen D Hall, *Lives in Translation*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See note 11.

<sup>13</sup> See Savita Narain, 'Sikhs in Leicester', in Nick Jewson (ed.) (1995), pp 89-107. It mentions the Jats and the Ramgarhias, but not the Rajputs and the Ravidassias, and there is no deeper investigation of various Gurdwaras and relationships between them. Moreover, in the book published in 2006, Leicester Gurdwaras are mentioned but there are some errors in description [Singh and Tatla (2006), p 74].

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/departments/page.asp?pgid=1009> (accessed: 31 July 2003).

<sup>15</sup> See Map.

<sup>16</sup> I almost invariably interviewed one by one. As for four different castes, I interviewed 62 Jats, 13 Rajputs, 45 Ramgarhias, 16 Ravidassias and 11 anonymous. I use substitute names except Lord Mayor of Leicester.

<sup>17</sup> My historiographical method is to place material from interviews alongside other accounts. On Sikh historiography, see W H McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> In the Punjab census reports that describe these castes, 'caste' is explained in

terms of Jati (zat or zat-biradari in modern Punjabi), or endogamous caste grouping. See Denzil Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Delhi; B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1974 (1916): Jat and Rajput (pp 97-163), Tarkhan [Ramgarhia] (pp 313-4), Chamar [Ravidasia] (p 297), Bhatra (p 258), and Chuhra (pp 293-4); H A Rose (ed.), *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (3 vols; Lahore, 1911-19), vol 2: Bhatra (pp 93-94), Chamar (pp 147-151), Chuhra (pp 182-214), Jats (pp 357-379), vol 3: Rajputs (pp 272-305), Tarkhan (pp 457-460); Nesbitt, *Sikhism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).pp.116-20. While Ravidassia shows a specific caste-based religious identity, Chamar refers to an endogamous caste group and professes a variety of religion.

<sup>19</sup> Ghuman (1980); Hindbalraj Singh, *Bhatra Sikhs in Bristol*, Bristol University, M.Sc.dissertation,1977; Roger Ballard and Catherine Ballard (1977); Nesbitt (1980); Kalsi (1992) ; Nesbitt (1994).

<sup>20</sup> Roger Ballard and Catherine Ballard (1977); Ballard (1994), pp 93-98; Nesbitt (1977), pp 50 -93; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 26-31.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/rank/ewskh.asp> (Accessed:7 February 2004)

<sup>22</sup> See note 16.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Santokh, 11 August 2004; Sarup, 17 August 2002 and 19 August 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Satnam, 17 August 2002.

See Map; Interview with Kartar, 20 August 2004; Jarnail, 16 March 2005; Tarlok, , 4 September 2004; Kolhan, 28 August 2005; Raj, 28 August 2005; Ajmer, 2 September 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Manjit, 13 August 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Avtar, 26 August 2004; Satpal, 12 March 2006; Manjit, 2 August 2006; Kalwant, 30 July 2006; see also Marett (1989) ; Deborah Phillips, 'The social and spatial segregation of Asians in Leicester', in Peter Jackson and Susan J Smith (eds), *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation*, (London: Academic Press, 1981), p 104; Bhachu (1985); Vertovec (1994); Joseph Seliga, 'A neighbourhood transformed,' *The Local Historian*, vol 28, no 4,1998; G Singh (2006).

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Satnam, 19 August 2003.

<sup>29</sup> *Survey of Leicester, 1983: Initial Report of Survey*, p 37.

<sup>30</sup> See Map.

<sup>31</sup> *LM.*, 14 April, 15 April and 10 October 1986.

<sup>32</sup> *LM.*, 19 and 21 May, 2004; Culdipp, 15 August 2008; *LM.*, 21 and 26 July 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Culdipp, 15 August 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Culdipp, 15 August 2008.

<sup>35</sup> *LM.*, 2 August, 2002; *The Sikh Times*, 8 August 2002.

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<sup>36</sup> From my visits to Gurdwaras in Leicester; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 69-93; Dhesi (2009).

<sup>37</sup> I am preparing for some other papers on the history of the other Sikh temples and the 'change' of Sikh communities in Leicester after the political incidents in the Punjab in 1984. See also Kalsi (1992), pp 66-73, 81-85, for a discussion of the Nirankari Mission and the Namdhari Sikhs.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Karmjit, 2 August, 2006; Gurdial, 9 and 13 August 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Jagder, 30 July 2002, 10 March 2005 and 8 March 2006; Gurdev, 28 August 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Regarding to 'factionalism' among Sikhs, see Joyce Pettigrew, *Robber Noblemen*, London: Routledge, 1975, pp 63-215; Ballard (1994), pp 109-112, 231-236; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 69-93.

<sup>41</sup> Jagder, 10 March 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Kartar, 20 August 2004 and 2 August 2006; Jagder, 30 July 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Jagder, 30 July 2002 and 10 March 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Jagder, 10 March 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Jagder, 10 March 2005; his obituary was published in *LM.*, 12 December 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Gurdev, 28 August 2003; Jagder, 10 March 2005; *LM.*, 17 and 20 November 1989.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ajmer, 20 August 2004 and 10 March 2006; Raghbir, 11 August 2004; Jagder, 8 March 2006; *LM.*, 14 April 1975, 9 August 1985 and 4 December 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Arjan, 10 March 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Joga, 6 March 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Ethne K Marenco, *The Transformation of Sikh Society*, (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1976), pp 113, 122; Gurpharpal Singh, *Religion and Politics in the Punjab*, (New Delhi: Deep Publications, 1986), pp 135-140; Ibbetson (1974), pp 131-163; Rose (1911-19), vol 3, pp 272-305.

<sup>51</sup> Sarbjeet, 16 March 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Joga, 13 August 2007; Karam, Mahesher, Shamser, Hundal and Sukhdev, 22 August 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Harbans, 29 August 2003 and 19 March 2005; Jagder, 10 March 2005 and 20 March 2008; Bahader, 10 August 2007; Weller (2001), p 36.

<sup>54</sup> Harbans, 29 August 2003 and 19 March 2005; Jagdev, 19 March, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> *LM.*, 15 March, 1996, 9 January 1998 and 19 July, 2002; Ranuana, 3 September, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Joga, 16 March, 2005 & 18 August 2005; Sarbjeet, 16 March 2005 and 18 August 2005.

<sup>57</sup> As for caste prejudice existing in the Panth, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, *Sikh Identity among Sikhs*, Aldershot; Ashgate, 2005, pp 184-5.

<sup>58</sup> W H MacLeod, *Ahluwalias and Ramgarhias*, vol.4, Issue 1, 1974, pp 78-90;



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Ibbetson (1974), pp 313-4; Rose(1911-19), vol 3, pp 457-460; Kalsi (1992), pp 86, 125-6, Kalsi, 'The Sikhs and Caste', in Pashaura Singh & N Gerald Barrier, *Sikh Identity*, (New Delhi, Manohar, 2001), pp 255-274.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Malkiat, 17 March 2006; Harbans, 31 July 2006; Avtar, 26 August 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Avtar, 26 August 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Harjit, 14 August 2007.

<sup>62</sup> Manjit, 17 March 2006.

<sup>63</sup> See note 27; Barton M Schwartz(ed), *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities*, (California: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), pp 267-320; Kalsi (2001), pp. 255-274.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Jasbir, 31 July 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Shamsar, 16 March 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Bhachu (1989); Manjit Singh Sidhu, *The Sikh in Kenya*, (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1997); Ballard (1994), p 111; Jasbir, 31 July 2006; Shamsar, 16 March 2006; Raghbir, 30 July 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Kalsi (1992), pp 111-15; Jasbir, 31 July 2006.

<sup>68</sup> Jaspal, 31 July 2006; Weller (2001), pp 562-85;

<http://www.sikh.net/Gurdwara/World/GWUK.htm>

(accessed: 26 September 2009)

<sup>69</sup> Shamsar, 16 March 2006; Bahader, 10 August 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Bhachu (1985, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> Gurdew, 28 August 2003; Malkiat, 23 August 2005; Jarnail, 11 March 2007; *LM.*, 15 August 1984 and 23 March 1993.

<sup>72</sup> Gurdew, 28 August 2003 and 18 March 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Gurdew, 28 August 2003 and 18 March 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religion as Social Vision*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), pp 245-57; Ibbetson (1974), p 297; Rose, vol 2, pp147-151.

<sup>76</sup> Kalsi (1992), pp 125-28; Ibbetson (1974), p 297; Rose, vol 2, pp 147-151.

<sup>77</sup> Kalsi (1992), pp 125-28; Ronki Ram, 'Untouchability, Dalit consciousness, and the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38, 3, 2004; <http://ravidassia.wordpress.com/list-of-temples/> [List of Temples: The Ravidassia Community] (accessed: 20 June, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Kalsi (1992), p 131; Juergensmeyer (1982), pp 245-57; Gurdew, 30 August 2005.

<sup>79</sup> Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

<sup>81</sup> Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Maricharan, 17 August 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Nesbitt (1994), p 141; Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Jarnail, 11 March 2007; Regarding 'Chuhra', Rose, vol 2, pp182- 214.

<sup>85</sup> See note 16 and Juergensmeyer (1982).

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Mahesher, 20 March 2009.

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<sup>87</sup> Mahesher, 20 March 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Singh (1978); Kalsi (1992); Ballard (1994), pp 88-116; Gerd Baumann, *Contesting culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>89</sup> Tatla (1999), Roger Ballard, 'The South Asian presence in Britain and its transnational connections' in Bhikhu Parekh, Gurharpal Singh and Steven Vertovec (eds), *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Harold Coward, John R Hinnells and Raymond B Williams (eds), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000); Judith M Brown, *Global South Asians*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> See note 6; [www.castewatchuk.org/aboutus.htm](http://www.castewatchuk.org/aboutus.htm) and <http://www.castewatchuk.org/history.htm> (accessed: 26 September 2009).