

Bartered bridegrooms

Transacting Muslim masculinities
as colonial legacy



SURIYAH BI

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Manchester University Press

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*For Marcia Inhorn
My Anthro-Mum*

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Introduction

Faisal arrived in Birmingham, a city that lies a few hours north-west of London, in 2000, after his now ex-wife visited Pakistan on a family trip and told her mother that she wanted to marry him. His parents were delighted that a British woman within the family kinship network had selected their handsome son as her spouse and responded with an immediate ‘Yes’ to the match. Faisal had little choice but to be thrilled with his bride-to-be and the prospect of a new life in Britain – a chance to improve his family’s economic and social status. Eight months after the marriage ceremony, a jubilant affair in Faisal’s village in Pakistan, Faisal’s spousal visa application with the United Kingdom’s Home Office was approved. Neighbours, friends, and cousins celebrated news of his imminent residence in Britain by lighting fireworks and distributing freshly made *mithai* (Pakistani sweets). At the same time, however, his family silently mourned the little time that he had left with them before waving goodbye for the *Pardes*, a foreign land, an unknown and uncertain space, but one that would surely change their lives for the better.

After his marriage migration, Faisal settled into his wife’s family home in Birmingham, a three-bedroom terraced house, where he quickly became trapped under the watchful eye of his father-in-law (also his maternal uncle), who oversaw his employment, clocked his hours, and took his wages. Faisal’s new status not only involved the embodied act of migrating to Britain, a country he had dreamed of inhabiting since he was a little boy, but also catapulted him into an invisible but deeply palpable web of power relations. This complex, criss-crossing web was woven by multiple actors that suddenly had a say over Faisal’s life: the state, his wife, in-laws, and employers. On the journey home from the airport, Faisal’s father-in-law demanded that he hand over his passport, which remained in his possession for several arduous years to come. Although his father-in-law assisted Faisal in obtaining work as a bricklayer (an occupation in which he had no prior experience), and later a string of low-paid jobs in local supermarkets and

butchers, he routinely confiscated his earnings by using his personal relationship with employers who were also his friends. Every week Faisal's boss would simply hand over his wages directly to his father-in-law. Faisal was allowed to keep only £20 of the nearly £150 that he earned each week, which he would spend on pay-as-you-go credit on a finicky Nokia mobile phone to speak to his parents back home.

Over time, Faisal's relationship with his wife deteriorated, arguments between the couple escalated, and he was met with aggression and violence from his father-in-law, who believed he was unnecessarily upsetting his daughter. The violence perpetuated by the father-in-law inspired further physical violence from his brothers-in-law and verbal abuse from his mother-in-law. One morning, after a heated argument with his wife after he had found a packet of condoms in her handbag, which Faisal insisted could not be his as the couple had not engaged in intercourse for over four months, his father-in-law physically beat him so severely that he lost control of his bladder and fell unconscious. After he had lain in urine and blood for a day his brother-in-law finally took him to hospital, where he was treated for broken ribs, a broken nose, and internal bruising. After his recovery Faisal ran away from the hospital and slept in parks across the city for days before seeking help from a relative who shared a similar marriage migration journey. His relative enjoyed the revered status that came with being a known businessman in the community. Through his support, Faisal was able to secure a divorce and eventually gain British citizenship, and was thereby allowed to remain in the United Kingdom indefinitely. The severe physical violence he had endured was seen by the British Pakistani community as a moral wrongdoing perpetuated by Faisal's in-laws. The social stigma by their peers shamed the in-laws into helping Faisal obtain a type of residency immigration status known as indefinite leave to remain (ILR), and his freedom from the abusive marriage, which had lasted for six years. There took place between Faisal and his in-laws a transaction negotiated by his relative, which secured Faisal's citizenship, while at the same time allowing his in-laws to recover some of their tainted honour.

Is this how Faisal imagined his marriage and migration experience would unfold when he first set out on his journey from a village in Azad Kashmir to Birmingham? How does this jarring experience contradict with his pre-departure expectations? Against his wishes, and with a loose grip on his own agency, Faisal was subjected to his father-in-law's controlling behaviour within and outside the home, which echoes Michael Fischer's (1991: 103–104) argument that the highest form of *izzat* (honour), which is usually seen to be associated with the female body, in fact seeks to regulate the bodies of men. As Faisal's personal narrative demonstrates, such unchecked control can erode human dignity, extending its shadow beyond

the intimate spaces of household and community into the workplace, and the realms of the state's immigration and citizenship laws. In Faisal's case, and for many other Pakistani migrant husbands revealed in this book, the intimidating figure of the father-in-law embodies not only the levers of patriarchy but also the state itself.

Sufyan is another migrant husband from Pakistan who I was introduced to by one of my interlocutors during my ethnographic research for this book. At the time of my ethnographic research he was living in Pakistan. He was married to his cousin, with whom he shared two children, but he struggled to join them in Britain because his wife was unemployed. Since 2012 British immigration laws have required applicants to demonstrate a minimum annual income of £18,500 to legally sponsor a spouse, which has been increased to £29,000 at present (May, Geiger, and Seddon 2023). Since Sufyan's wife had left school with no qualifications and had never been employed, she could not meet the necessary minimum threshold to sponsor his visa application. Eight years after their marriage Sufyan was practising being a husband and father in a transnational context, working at a petrol station on the outskirts of Islamabad, through which he earned a living. During our remote interview via Skype he told me, 'I never thought I would be a father or a husband in this way ... I fear my children will forget me or think I'm a bad father when they grow up. I feel so stuck.' Sufyan's experience can also be seen as a series of failed transactions between the state and his wife, as the income requirement threshold was not met, resulting in his being stuck and having to practise fatherhood across borders.

Other stories trace arduous tales with similar beginnings originating in hometowns, villages, and cities across Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, where men undertook migratory paths despite being mired in struggle and emotional turmoil, and often ended up in situations of domestic violence in their new households. Armaan's family had initially selected his uncle's daughter as a suitable wife for him, but she rejected the prospect of marrying a 'freshie' from 'back home'. Armaan and his family were heartbroken, as they had 'fixed' his *rishta* (marriage proposal) when his cousin Sarish had been born and had done their utmost to raise Armaan as a suitable Britain-bound husband, fussing over his diet, clothing, and education, so as to appeal to Sarish. Armaan was dressed in attire such as stifling sweaters that 'looked' English, a choice that was often a poor fit for the sweltering heat in his hometown, and asked his barber to mimic the latest 'British' hairstyles. Despite their limited financial means, his parents took care to include meat, dairy, and protein in his diet, in the hope that he would present as physically fit and able-bodied – all to raise a desirable groom for a British Pakistani bride. In spite of their efforts, Sarish refused to marry Armaan, which caused great distress for Armaan's family. Eventually, through much

searching for a British *rishta* to save face from the shame caused by Sarish's rejection, Armaan married the daughter of his mother's sister in the United Kingdom, thus fulfilling the family aspirations of marriage migration.

The experiences of Muslim migrant husbands such as Faisal, Sufyan, and Armaan – and others – who journey from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, a self-governing region administered by Pakistan, are woven into this book. The focus is on marriages between a woman who is a British Pakistani national and a man who is a Pakistani national, the latter having migrated to the United Kingdom to join his wife and her family.

On many levels, these personal narratives collectively reveal the systemic problem of how Muslim migrant husbands experience and navigate multifarious structures of oppression, including the patriarchal demands and institutional and inherited racism built into the British immigration system, and racialization and criminalization processes against Muslim men. Through years of fieldwork and one-to-one interviews, I show the ways in which young Muslim migrant men experience the unfulfilled promise of marriage migration and the various forms of injustice – including racism, domestic violence, threats of deportation, insecure immigration status, and homelessness, to name but a few – that transpire in and through this process. I also show the ways in which they become the site of transactions between various social actors, as well as social actors and the state.

Such an approach to understanding the experiences of Muslim migrant men (and Muslim men more broadly) in Britain has largely been neglected in the literature on gender, migration, and diaspora studies. It has also been conspicuously absent from public debate on the subject. This is surprising, not least because each year approximately equal numbers of male and female spouses from the Indian subcontinent are granted the right to settle and work in the United Kingdom (Charsley et al. 2011). Existing scholarship has long been one-sided, focusing predominantly on the experiences and vulnerabilities of migrant women. There is thus a paucity of research into men who migrate through marriage to settle with their wife or her parents' household, who have been described within south Asian communities as *ghar dhamad* (house son-in-law), a designation that undermines the male migrant's agency and status as an equal partner to his wife (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Lyon 1989: 37). More recently, however, studies have begun to report that migrant husbands experience unhappiness due to their perceived inferiority relative to other members of the household (Charsley 2005). An apparent lack of authority, and the grievances that this breeds, in his new surroundings can be attributed to the traditional patriarchal conceptions of marriage or fatherhood that he probably perceived during his own upbringing, sometimes resulting in such men ultimately abandoning their wives and children because of the incongruence between his expectations and reality.

Charsley and Liversage (2015) have described migrant husbands as being ‘silenced’, and, more recently, Charsley and Ersanilli (2018) demonstrate the ways that migrant husbands can feel trapped in and through marriage migration. This growing body of literature has yet to be connected and embedded into the wider landscape of men and masculinity studies, whereby scholars have argued for multiple masculinities (Connell 2005; Hopkins 2006: 349–350), plural masculinities (Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008), and emergent masculinities (Inhorn 2012).

Anthropological literature has examined the transactional aspects of marriage (Bossen 1988; Schlegel and Eloul 1988; Harrell and Dickey 1985; Singer 1973; Anderson 2007), particularly exploring bride price and dowries in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Within the transnational marriage literature, a number of studies can be interpreted as involving transactional elements, such as those that refer to the ‘international marriage market’ (Sinke 1999), a female deficit (Faier 2007; Kaur 2012), and mail-order brides (Jackson 2002, 2007; Kojima 2001; Constable 2003), and those that occur between diaspora communities and their home countries (Gardner 1995; Shaw 2001; Pande 2014; Selby 2009; Mooney 2006; Gallo 2006; Charsley 2005). I build on these works to showcase the ways in which transnational marriage involving migrant husbands entails transacting the migrant husband in relation to the in-laws’ desires, as well as the desires of the nation state.

A ‘problem community’

Today Britain is home to approximately 1 million British Pakistanis (Shaw 2006, 2009), two-thirds of whom are from the northern areas of Pakistan, and the remaining third from the Punjab region (Ballard 1994), with their migration having largely taken place in the post-war period. Geographical differences surrounding the home country have influenced settlement patterns in Britain: those from mainland Azad Kashmir from cities such as Mirpur and Dadyal and surrounding areas tend to cluster in cities such as Bradford and Birmingham, while those from mainland Pakistan from areas such as the Punjab predominate in Manchester and Glasgow (Shaw 1988, 2000; Werbner 1990). Just as there are discernible settlement patterns, migrant communities inevitably travel with their cultures and ideas about family and work (Clifford 1997), which are renegotiated and reworked over the course of their encounters and experiences in Britain.

For members of the British Pakistani community, the practice of arranged marriage is common, and has translated into arranged transnational marriages among the second and third generations. Such marriages

across borders are instrumental in maintaining existing, and creating new links with relatives in Pakistan (Shaw 2006). A large proportion of these marriages are also consanguineous, as demonstrated in studies conducted by Shaw (2001), linking up with spatial organisation and settlement, as a number of married couples making up the extended family live in the same household (Shaw 2001; Ballard 1994). In instances when the household capacity cannot accommodate the growing joint family, families purchase houses on the same street, and one or two married couples move into the house next door (Ballard 1994). Such patterns of household formation within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community correlate with the household formation trends of eastern European migrants described by Hajnal (1982; see also Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994; Shaw 2006), which can, in the case of migrant husbands, heighten their vulnerability. Although the data on household settlement trends among the British Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant community are not routinely updated, in general the surveys conducted in the 1990s and 2000s have continued to be a close approximation of prevailing trends.

Gender dynamics can be seen to play out in spaces outside the household within the British Pakistani community, with education being one notable example. The literature on educational opportunities and outcomes for young British Muslim women (Brah 1996; Haw 1998; Shain 2002) emphasises the gendered influences of parents and teachers on their aspirations. The increase in numbers of young women among this group attending higher education has repeatedly been noted (Dale et al. 2002; Hussain and Bagguley 2007) as an indication of changing cultural norms (Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010), as well as the aspirations of young girls, which is reflected in their outperforming of their male peers (Dwyer and Shah 2009). Rising divorce rates within the community are also interpreted as indicative of a change in gender ideologies, which have translated into greater support for girls' educational attainment (Dwyer and Shah 2009). Increasingly, education has been seen as a kind of insurance policy against a possible failed marriage down the line, to ensure a woman's financial stability as well as her emotional, physical, and psychological well-being.

Meanwhile, for young men in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities, gender identity has been found to be a more complex matter. A range of different masculinities construct male-oriented aspirations and values in different ways, rendering the male experience a fluctuating and challenging one. For instance, Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera (2008) document particular attitudes towards education and work, which are influenced through factors such as peer group pressure, which weaken ties with families and encourages boys to participate in illegal activities, and gender ideologies, which reinforce traditional breadwinning roles for men through taking up business

ventures (Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 123). There is also considerable literature around the anxiety surrounding the criminalization of young Pakistani men in Britain and elsewhere (Modood and Werbner 1997: 147; see also Alexander 2004; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254; Hoque 2019: 5).

The representation of Pakistanis and Kashmiris in Britain has predominantly (mis)identified, and thus amalgamated, migrants from Azad Kashmir as Pakistani. Both communities are referred to under the umbrella identity of 'Pakistani', which is largely represented as a 'problem community' due to the perceived patriarchal predispositions of its members, further sharpened through the literature on forced marriages and domestic violence (Kalra 2009: 115; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254). Macey (1999) highlights how the involvement of young Pakistani men in organised gangs in the city of Bradford poses a threat to the entire community, but that young Asian women are its most common and frequent victims. Domestic violence remains a taboo subject, and women express frustration with the collusion of religious leaders with perpetrators in the community, especially since the former often advise them to behave as dutiful Muslim wives, rather than seek redress through the legal system (Macey 1999). The traditional views of many members of the Pakistani community towards female dress and behaviour are inextricably linked to concepts of honour and shame (Afshar 1994; Kassam 1997), dubbed as the 'policing' of women (Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254). In their extreme forms, such views can translate into so-called honour-based violence, in the form of forced marriages and the murder of women (Gill 2009).

The stereotype that British Pakistanis constitute a 'problem community' that mobilises around patriarchal norms and gender roles that are out of step with greater British society (Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254) has proved to be a resilient one. It has also narrowed our range of vision when it comes to a nuanced understanding of the contemporary British Pakistani community. Such stereotypes impose a binary structure through which to view gendered experiences, whereby men are often cast as the oppressors and women as the oppressed. The migration and transnationalism literature suggests quite the contrary, as shifting gender roles can lead to conflict and abuse for both migrant husbands and wives in their adopted homes (Espiritu 1997: 75; Luu 1989: 68). A number of examples show how the migration experience has altered inherited gender dynamics over time, with notable implications for the institution of marriage. Shaw (2006: 336), for example, reports that, due to the pioneer generation of British Pakistani women constructing their household dynamics in the absence of a dominating mother-in-law, younger generations of women now have different views on who wields power in the household in comparison to their migrant

husbands (Shaw 2000). In addition, Charsley (2013) notes how some families reserve their right to delay the *rukhsati* (sending off of the bride) until the groom joins his wife in the United Kingdom upon obtaining his immigration status. Although it is customary for Pakistani brides to shed tears at their wedding ceremony to mark their exodus from the maternal home, some modern brides argue that it would be more fitting for their husbands to grieve, as they are the ones leaving their families behind – not the other way around (Charsley 2013). Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera (2010: 252) note that Pakistani mothers were critical in transmitting socio-cultural values within their home, particularly with fathers engaged in labour over long periods of time. More recently Qureshi (2013: 13) has reported how middle-aged women use the notion of *sabr* (patience) to invoke guilt in husbands and children when they wish to achieve a particular outcome in family decision-making processes – another sign that household power dynamics have evolved through migration. Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera (2010: 251) also document the ways in which Pakistani Muslim households are prone to ongoing negotiation and contestation of patriarchal norms. This is particularly underlined as a result of the conflicting and overlapping identities and allegiances common in Pakistani Muslim communities (Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 250). Migration can create the social dynamics in which these overlapping identities and allegiances can interact, a consequence of which is a widening of the spaces in which British Pakistani women can assert themselves. This is particularly seen within marriage (see also Qureshi, Charsley, and Shaw 2014; Mooney 2006), even at early stages of the life cycle. Prevailing norms, discourses, and dynamics circulating in the host society can also permeate the migrant community and further exacerbate the shift in gender roles, expanding the public and private spaces in which women can assert themselves (see also Alexander 2013: 342), such as developments in family planning and technological innovations, which have changed the nature of care and labour in the home (Greenwood, Seshadri, and Yorukoglu 2003; Popenoe 1993).

The impact of these shifting gender dynamics on sons, husbands, and fathers within the British Pakistani community has received little attention. By considering a range of case studies (Walsh 2011; Gallo 2006), it is possible to hypothesise that Muslim migrant husbands experience considerable social and emotional turbulence (see also Datta et al. 2009: 863; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127) at different stages of their migration journey, which, arguably, does not end at the point at which they reach their final destination. The ways in which men manage this turbulent upending of their lives demands a rethink of the common stereotypes of Muslim men, particularly of Pakistani heritage, which often depict them as oppressive, all-powerful patriarchs, gang members, or sexual predators (Ali 1992;

Alexander 2001; Hoque 2019: 2; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254). Prevailing attitudes of the British Pakistani community as a problem community are (mis)informed by its presumed patriarchal structures, despite many authors, such as Abu-Lughod (1986), having pointed out that patriarchy affects not only women but also men (see also Joseph 1996; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). In this book, I set out to unpack and dismantle harmful stereotypes surrounding this community by carefully considering the intersections of marriage, masculinity, and migration, and exploring how Muslim migrant husbands from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir navigate the shifts in gender dynamics upon marriage migration to Britain. This book maps the implications of migrant husbands' experiences onto the concept and practice of embodied patriarchy and discusses the ways that patriarchal conventions have been disrupted, and how. From a conceptual perspective, I employ and expand upon Turner's (1967) work on the idea of liminality to argue that Muslim migrant husbands experience a kind of liminal masculinity, which suspends patriarchy as we currently understand it.

Disrupting conventional understandings around the 'Muslim migrant man'

Over a period of two years I ethnographically tracked more than 62 Muslim Pakistani men in Birmingham who had journeyed to Britain as migrant husbands since the 1990s. My interviews were conducted in English, Urdu, and Pothwari. Although in the research planning stages I intended to conduct interviews in community centre meeting rooms, where both my safety and the interlocutors' safety was ensured as per university ethics approval guidelines, during my fieldwork I found that male interlocutors much preferred to speak via mobile phone. This resolved a number of cultural obstacles that required careful manoeuvring around, including the risk of reputational damage for both me as the interviewer – a young, unmarried, woman – and the interlocutors, heightened by cultural and religious codes that impose taboo for a woman to be meeting alone with a *ghair mahram* (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 259). *Ghair mahram* translates as 'non-family member' or 'stranger', with whom a *nikaah* (Islamic marriage contract) is permissible. Thus, whereas in academic contexts the relationship between interviewee and interlocutor can facilitate new forms knowledge, within this particular field site it could easily be (mis)interpreted as a romantic and/or sexual affair, and therefore unlawful on both religious and cultural grounds. I have employed throughout the manuscript the experiences of my interlocutors sensitively, in order to do justice not only to their participation but also to

the broader circumstances in which they often found themselves (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121).

A key finding that emerged from my ethnographic research is that Pakistani Muslim migrant men constitute a significant subaltern crisis of masculinity that is overlooked by dominant scholarly approaches. This subaltern crisis of masculinity is particularly enabled in and through experiences of liminality, which influences their embodied experience of masculinity. Such masculinity is one that is in flux, trapped between the dreams of young bridegrooms, leaving their homes for a fresh start, and the unsettling, often violent, new reality that confronts them in their role as migrant, not yet British, husbands, in Birmingham. The prolonged periods of waiting (Honwana 2012; Singerman 2007) experienced by Muslim migrant husbands, such as Sufyan, whose narrative was described earlier, is a key feature of what I term 'liminal masculinity'. To counter this state of protracted and traumatic 'waithood', as I call it, I explore how migrant husbands employ different forms of constructive agency and resistance, such as lyrical music and video collages on social media. Second, I recount how these men develop and engage in novel forms of prophetic masculinity, participating in spiritual brotherhoods to help them make sense of and navigate their experiences of domestic and financial violence, and subordination in their households.

Through successive chapters, I argue that a 'feminisation' of marriage has occurred within the British Pakistani community. This term, in my view, captures how marriage as an institution has, in *some* instances, become more favourable to British (born and raised) Pakistani women. There are several contributing factors to this phenomenon, such as having kin in proximity (see also Shaw and Charsley 2006), and a widening political, social, and economic space within which women can exercise agency, choice, and preference (see also Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010). As a result, women often enjoy a superior position within the parameters of their marriages relative to their mothers and grandmothers. A significant factor that amplifies women's power is their British citizenship, which becomes leverage against their husbands, who suffer a precarious state of being as a result of immigration limbo, sometimes even years after their arrival. Often a woman enjoys this feminisation with both direct and implicit support extended by her parents, who act as authoritative enablers with newfound control over their migrant son-in-law. Patriarchy in this instance operates not only along gendered lines but through the possession of British citizenship, as an instrument of power and subordination of the 'weaker' party. In this way, then, colonial legacies seem to be adopted through pioneer migrants and their acquisition of British citizenship, to subject new migrants to power and control. This is resonant with Kalra's (2009: 121) article, wherein it is noted that effeminate

masculinities within south Asian groups, such as Bengalis, are contrasted with Pathans and Punjabis, who were seen as the 'real men'. Citizenship acquired through pioneer migration, then, has organised incoming migrant men as more effeminate and thus more vulnerable to subjugation.

The premise for this book is provided by the existing scholarship, which, although it has begun to document the experiences of migrant men, could do more to investigate appropriately and explain the personal, often overlooked, experiences of vulnerable Pakistani migrant husbands in Britain. More nuanced studies could have significant implications for the individuals and families who make up this community, as well as others who share a similar experience. This is particularly important because of what it reveals about the struggles of migrants from ethnic communities in British society, and because it relates to human rights issues; many of the men studied here experienced unlawful violence, confiscation of wages, and poor labour conditions (see also McDowell, Rootham, and Hardgrove 2015). In what follows, I set out to respond to the glaring discrepancies and unexplored grey areas within the literature, which neglects the stories of Muslim Pakistani migrant men in contemporary Britain. Many ethnographies that focus on migrant experiences tend to associate feelings of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation with women migrants (Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Parreñas 2005a). Resistance and agency narratives within the Global South have also tended to focus on women's experiences (Abu-Lughod 1986; Raheja and Gold 1994; Mahmood 2001). Research into Muslim men's masculine experiences in the United Kingdom has begun to take place (Archer 2003; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008; Hopkins 2006; Kalra 2009; Hoque 2019; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010: 254), yet there is more to be explored and documented, to account for the complex social mesh in which they exist across multiple transnational fronts, including but not limited to a transnational ethnic identity, a global(ised) Muslim identity, and a Western identity in which Britishness is key. Taking an intersectional approach that considers the postcolonial, state power, and transnational migration context as part of the social web, my own research over many years has shown that Muslim migrant men suffer similar experiences and emotions to the ones women have been documented as experiencing (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). With some exceptions, however, their diverse experiences are too often overlooked or trivialised. What can explain this oversight? Due to the Western 'gaze' (Said 1978) and the grand narratives that have been produced and reproduced in and through the power of coloniality (see also Kalra 2009: 118) in the academy (Murrey 2019), Muslim men are overwhelmingly perceived and portrayed through reductionist and highly negative terms such as terrorists, gang members, overbearing patriarchs, or wife beaters (see, for example, Alexander 2000; Archer 2003; Dwyer, Shah, and

Sanghera 2008; Hopkins 2006; Kalra 2009; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254). For decades this approach has gripped the academic literature within the social sciences, with the events of the 9/11 attacks and the ‘War on Terror’ intensifying patterns of Islamophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric further. Although critical theorists in the field of masculinity studies, such as Raewyn Connell (2005), have argued for the existence of multiple masculinities as opposed to one form of masculinity – hegemonic masculinity – in operation, it is only in some arenas that such theoretical luxuries have been afforded to the study of Muslim men born in Britain (Hopkins 2006; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008). One study that does afford multiple, fluid, and multifaceted masculinities to Muslim men is that of Hopkins (2006), who shows that markers of locality and social difference can impact masculinity among Muslim men of Pakistani heritage in Edinburgh and Glasgow, leading him to argue that multiple Muslim masculinities exist. Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera’s (2010) work particularly highlights the nuances of the ethno-religious habitus in which Pakistani Muslim families exist, and thereby the way in which masculinity is shaped in relation to age, gender, and generation, but also familial ambitions. Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera (2008) also posit masculinities as relational to age, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, and place. They further contribute to the understanding of Pakistani Muslim masculinities as plural by identifying four masculine forms among their informants: religious masculinities, middle-class masculinities, rebellious masculinities, and ambivalent masculinities. Within the marriage migration literature, migrant men’s experiences have begun to be documented in the last decade or so, with Marcia Inhorn’s (2012) book *The New Arab Man* signalling perhaps a pivotal moment in the evolution of Muslim masculinity studies. Demonstrating the ways that Arab Muslim men support their wives to overcome infertility through assisted reproduction, Inhorn argues that new masculinities are emerging among Middle Eastern Muslim men, which have previously gone unnoticed under the myriad frames of vilifying, anti-Muslim rhetoric. My findings add to and further expand on Inhorn’s important contribution to the field of Muslim masculinities in a transnational context, as I uncover how such ‘emergent masculinities’ are formed in and through vulnerability and violence, and also document the different forms of masculinities that help migrant husbands navigate the uncertain social terrain in which they find themselves.

As British Pakistanis constitute one of the largest diaspora communities in the United Kingdom (Ballard 1994; Shaw 2000), literature in the field of transnational and diaspora studies have recognised them as being a vulnerable population, often taken advantage of by their kinship groups in Pakistan to exploit their British citizenship and improved economic status. Such narratives harm those in the Global South, however, by reproducing

stereotypes that depict those back in the home country as manipulative agents motivated to climb out of abject poverty. This imagery constitutes the default position when describing sending countries in the Global South in relation to diaspora communities that ‘make it’ in the West or the Global North. Such narratives that indicate those ‘back home’ fail to take account of the reverse, however: that diaspora communities that actively maintain extended transnational kinship ties often benefit by sponsoring a migrant husband for their daughter in Britain. The benefits also extend to keeping land and property in the family, as many of these marriages occur between close kin, including first cousins (see Shaw 2006). Transactions involving symbolic exchanges involving brides, grooms, land, and property are therefore central to the transnational marriages taking place in British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities, thus suggesting benefits on both sides, which places the notion of those ‘back home’ exploiting members of the diaspora in jeopardy. In some instances, the transactional exchanges were not only symbolic but also carried legal support. For example, my interview with Ali reveals how, in exchange for paying for the *nikaah* ceremony, his in-laws negotiated a form of informal prenuptial agreement or insurance policy that would grant them the deed to his parents’ land in Pakistan in the event that the marriage failed. This made it impossible for Ali to leave the marriage even when he was faced with domestic violence, as this would guarantee the loss of his family’s ancestral land to his abusive father-in-law. Ali’s marriage involved a series of transactions, primarily the transaction of his family’s land as an insurance in case the marriage broke down. Moreover, the *nikaah* document doubled up as not just a religious covenant between the spouses but also a socio-cultural and economic document that recorded the transactional underbelly of the transnational marriage. By largely neglecting such experiences, the existing literature in many ways risks denying what Spivak (1988) has referred to as the subaltern’s ability to speak. This book dramatically shifts this skewed power relation within the field, unsettling the academic gaze as well as realigning the often invisible structures of fieldwork, ethnography, and the translation of ethnographic fieldwork, to allow the subaltern to speak within a postcolonial context, in which colonial legacies continue to thrive in multiple and diverse ways.

Much of the migration literature operates on the logic of ‘push/pull’ factors, with migrants deciding to leave their birth countries due to poverty, war, and violence, and being pulled into more affluent countries by the better prospects and economic opportunities available there (Lee 1966; Harris and Todaro 1970). Critics of this approach have argued that it ignores many centuries of exploitation, forced labour, and resource extraction by imperialism and colonial powers of poorer countries, resulting in long-standing structural inequalities that drive outward migration (Castles and Kosack

1973; Sassen 1988). In many ways, the push/pull factor approach can be seen as a series of transactions between nation states and citizens of former colonies. Even though the direction of power of these transactional migrations forms has remained with nation states, the granting of visas for the rebuilding of their economies after the Second World War, in exchange for housing, welfare, healthcare for migrants, and later for their families, can be mapped along transactional relations.

Although the transactional ‘push/pull’ factor approach may help explain the first and second waves of migration between 1960 and 1980 from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to Britain (Ballard 1994), it does not adequately account for continued migration flows in spite of awareness of the hardships and increasingly difficult conditions for migrants and working-class people in Britain. Carling and Schewel (2018) posit a novel model, involving aspiration and desire, to account for migration patterns, which I have found in some ways to complement the experiences of Muslim migrant husbands. As this book shows in Chapter 1, however, my findings depart from Carling and Schewel’s (2018) model, as aspirations and the desire to migrate (see also Datta et al. 2009: 864) are at times curated over long periods of time by the family of migrant husbands. In Armaan’s case, for example, his diet, clothing, and hair style were constantly shaped to ensure that he would fit the ‘look’ of a British national, and therefore appeal to the family’s desired bride choice for him. This book builds on Carling and Schewel’s work while at the same time acknowledging and exploring the role of the wider family network on both sides of the transnational field, and how their needs, aspirations, and desires influence the migration journey. Since the site of aspiration making often begins with, and most certainly includes, the social imaginary (see also Appadurai 1990) particularly exercised through dreaming (see also Datta et al. 2009: 864), I argue that migration journeys should also include the landscape of the imagination in addition to the geographical countries or locations that migrants travel through and between.

Generally speaking, the conventional approach assumes that the migration journey is a linear one, with clearly demarcated start and stopping points, and a temporal beginning and ending (Collins 2018: 972). In contrast, the goal here is to dismantle suggestions that migration is a one-way, one-stop journey. In following the journeys of Muslim migrant husbands, this book shows that migrant journeys include starts, sudden stops, pauses, interruptions, blockages, and diversions as a result of the different ways in which a number of factors – citizenship; ideas around honour and shame; power; race and gender; restrictive immigrations laws; poverty; and education – come to intersect, all of which can render the migrant husband vulnerable. Much of this vulnerability is entangled with increasing waithood periods, during which the migrant husband faces precarious working and

immigration conditions, an architectural product of the British state's labyrinthine immigration laws. Although some have no choice but to endure waitthood in Pakistan due to criteria around spousal immigration, such as the financial salary threshold of £18,500 per annum (Sufyan is an example here), which was raised to £20,000 in 2024, others experience long probationary periods on their arrival, when, in pursuit of elusive British citizenship, they are vulnerable to domestic and workplace violence (see also Datta et al. 2009: 865–866). Others, such as Amir, are threatened with deportation by their in-laws or wives should they step out of line, and some, such as Faisal, face temporary homelessness. It is fair to say that the aspirations and desires that lead to marriage migration are subject to seismic shifts over time and negotiated through multiple transactions, a central concern traced throughout this book.

The waitthood and precarity Muslim migrant husbands experience upon marriage migration speak to a body of anthropological literature on the 'in between'. Roger Ballard (1994) coined the term 'code-switching' to describe the ways in which youth in the British Pakistani diaspora navigated between the home, where cultural values were forefront, and the school, where more Western values were centre stage. For migrants, this in-betweenness has been explored in the form of refugee camps as being a liminal phase (Turner 1999). As Victor Turner initially posited (1967), however, liminality is temporary and enables the becoming, or coming into being, into the next stage of one's life. But what happens if the liminal phase is indefinitely extended? What if the liminal phase is when life, the act of living from day to day, occurs? What if the liminal phase morphs into an ongoing, inescapable process? Employing migrant husband experiences, this book develops the concept of liminality further by demonstrating how migration is the ultimate form of liminality. This is extended further still to the asking of difficult but necessary questions, such as: what is the impact of living in permanent liminality on the gendered experiences of migrants? I argue that Muslim migrant husbands experience liminal masculinity, whereby the crisis of liminality is experienced at an embodied level.

My identification of the concept of waitthood to describe the situation of migrant husbands is closely connected to my own experiences of waitthood at the time I embarked on this research. I was embroiled in an employment tribunal case that spanned the duration of my PhD and long thereafter (even including the time of writing this book). My positionality as a woman of the margins, as I self-identify, and an 'insider anthropologist' (Crehan 2002; Abu-Lughod 1986) has been crucial in my fieldwork and, subsequently, the writing of this ethnography. Throughout this book I highlight how the structures of the academy, which were oppressive towards me during my time as a PhD student, also require decolonisation,

thus extending the decolonisation of the curriculum to both the construction of the classroom and the academy. Perhaps if my research had focused on the ways in which Muslim migrant husbands may be adopting extremist ideologies, pose a threat to national security, or engage in ‘sham’ marital arrangements upon their migration journeys, I would have been more likely to receive funding from research councils, grant-giving institutions, and universities. But, since my research explored the vulnerabilities of Muslim migrant husbands, this broke away from the mainstream political and legal discourses deeply intertwined with the Western academic gaze, forcing me to the peripheries of academic orthodoxy. I also consider the implications of binary constructions such as the Global South and Global North, which, even though they have been erected as more politically correct terminology to respect those in the Global South, are nonetheless still problematic. Through my own positionality as a Muslim, ethnic, female, working-class anthropologist and human geographer, I disturb the geographical boundaries of the Global South and Global North, arguing instead that I am a Global South scholar researching communities of the Global South in the Global North. The book therefore also draws on and speaks to the decolonisation discourse, as well as discourses around reflexive anthropology and feminist geography.

The book in outline

This book sets out to address a number of pressing questions. How do migrant husbands experience marriage migration to Britain? How do migrant husbands perceive the relationship between marriage, migration, and masculinity? In what ways do migrant husbands perceive and negotiate their positions in their wives’ and/or in-laws’ households? Such research questions aim to gather detailed and nuanced insights into the experiences of migrant husbands and their own conceptualisations of their changing position in the transnational landscapes they have navigated, often since childhood, as their families developed aspirations for them to migrate through marriage. Given this aim and my interest in exploring marriage migration from the perspective of migrant husbands within the context of their local (and transnational) context, the research methodology adopted was ethnographic in nature, including semi-structured interviews, life history narratives, and participant observation. Employing these methods, between February 2017 and August 2018 I conducted fieldwork with 62 migrant husband interlocutors and 43 community member interlocutors (family members, friends, neighbours of migrant husbands) and participant observation of a spiritual Sufi healer, who provided some migrant husbands

with talismans and *wazifas* (Islamic supplications) to perform in order to alleviate their hardships.

The book is structured thematically around the key findings arising throughout my research, exploring, in turn, the three forms of masculinity that I identify as having been experienced by the migrant husbands who participated in my study: transnational masculinity; liminal masculinity; and spiritual masculinity.

Transnational masculinity

Through the vectors of aspiration and desire, Muslim migrant husbands and their families begin their migrant journeys long before they physically embark on their voyage away from what is familiar to them. The culmination of such aspiration and desire is the emergence of transnational masculinity, embodied mainly through the image of the transnational patriarch, which shapes migrant husbands' expectations prior to their marriage migration. Nevertheless, their own experience usually departs from the ideal type representation of the successful economic migrant during or after the marriage migration occurs. [Chapter 1](#) therefore traces the way in which these aspirations change before, during, and after the marriage ceremony and subsequent migration to Britain. In the first section, I draw on life history interviews to demonstrate that the aspiration to migrate is often planted, nurtured, and facilitated by family members, sometimes from early childhood, and can include the *making* of the migrant husband – and his sense of masculinity – through fashioning the appearance of a desirable bridegroom, and marketing him through the use of digital technology and social media as a suitable spouse for a British Pakistani woman, and gain the approval of her family.

In the second section of this chapter, I highlight the differences between the imagined and lived experiences of migration and marriage, introducing the concept of the transnational patriarch as a masculine ideal that migrant husbands aspire(d) to, both while resident in Pakistan and after arriving in Birmingham. The image of the transnational patriarch conveys ideals of power within the family and community, and financial success; a man who commands considerable control over his affairs both in Britain and in Pakistan, a feat achieved through the act of marriage migration. The transnational patriarch is seen to possess a profitable business and a stable family that he heads as a respected husband and father, and to act as guardian of collective honour within the community. The chapter demonstrates the way in which these three elements are intricately linked, enabling the migrant husband to maintain his image as a successful migrant. As an ideal, he represents how successful migration acts as a currency that determines

social standing, respect, and honour at individual and communal levels (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130), echoing the notion of ‘desire’ being created outside a nation, yet being recognizable within the nation (Rafael 1997: 271).

The third section focuses on the experiences of migrant husbands after marriage and migration, which aids us in understanding how aspirations evolve, dissolve, or adapt over the course of migration. Building on the literature vis-à-vis waithood (Singerman 2007; Honwana 2012), I argue that migrant husbands enter a period of waithood after marriage, a product of the restrictive immigration rules and regulations set out by the UK Home Office to combat sham or false marriages. For some migrant husbands, the waithood period increases anxiety, emotional distress, and marital instabilities as they are separated from their new bride. Those who overcome this initial waithood period and successfully migrate to the United Kingdom face stiff responsibilities tied to being a migrant husband, including in the worlds of labour and citizenship acquisition. This chapter provides insights into the ways in which different actors within the various transnational spaces – such as the in-laws in terms of the wife’s household, state institutions through immigration laws, employers in the workplace – exert influence, pressure, and power over the migrant husband. Such factors create dissonance between migrant husbands’ imagined and lived realities, both before and after marriage migration.

Furthermore, I show that aspirations also undergo a kind of migration themselves, in the sense that they move, shift, and become unsettled, revealing a deeply interwoven relationship between migrant husbands, their social imaginaries, and their lived realities, echoing Borden’s (2001) argument that space and the body are internalised within one another. In order to negotiate these social imaginaries and lived realities, multiple transactions are constructed, conducted, and enacted. Aspiration making is identified as beginning in the social imaginary (see also Appadurai 1990). Several photographs of elaborate and expansive mansions shared with me by interlocutors are discussed in this chapter to show the ways in which physical translations of remittances help shape the image of the transnational patriarch within the social imaginary of Pakistani migrant men. My analysis of transnational masculinity thus demonstrates that the social imaginary is a significant location that migrant husbands inhabit, and to which they revert in times of self-doubt or crisis. It also holds significance for the ways in which social events unfold for migrant husbands within diverse spaces such as the home, workplace, and community, both within and across borders.

Liminal masculinity

[Chapter 2](#), ‘Liminal masculinity’, focuses more closely on the experiences of migrant husbands after marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, and, in doing so, provides a nuanced insight into the dissonance between the experiences of migrant husbands at different times in their life histories. I trace the intersections of postcolonial government structures, which still subject former colonies through immigration laws, the ideas of migration and social mobility held by young men, and the role of globalisation and consider the impact on Muslim men’s experiences of masculinity. In the first section, I show that migrant husbands can lead precarious lives due to entering prolonged periods of waithood, powerlessness, and inferiority before, during, and upon marriage and migration in relation to their wives, in-laws, and the British state. This lays the foundations for understanding migrant husband masculinities as liminal, as migrant husbands are increasingly ‘in between’ their identity as transnational patriarchs, which they had once envisaged, and their current status, as low-wage-earning unskilled labourers (see also Datta et al. [2009](#); McDowell, Rootham, and Hardgrove [2015](#)), or hostage to the whims and desires of his wife, in-laws and employers. I show that asserting control over their ‘imported’ sons-in-law animates and enables an almost mythical identity as a transnational patriarch by the pioneer generation of migrant men. This is not only congruent with Fischer’s ([1991](#): 103–104) argument that ideas around honour, usually associated with women in Muslim societies, are also closely linked with the surveillance and regulation of male bodies but, additionally, pregnant with colonial power forms (see also Bi [2023](#)). The migrant husband is, I argue, the site of transactions between multiple social actors, as well as between these social actors and the state.

The second part of this chapter explores the diverse manifestations of migrant husbands’ weak positions, providing insights into a little-researched area: how men cope with and navigate the changes brought about by what is conventionally known as uxorilocal marriage in a transnational setting. Uxorilocal marriages are forms of marriage common to South America whereby men migrate to settle in their wives’ households upon marriage. Migration and settlement into a diaspora community, coupled with the direction of power away from the male through the uxorilocal nature of the marriage, can increase his vulnerability. Uxorilocal forms of marriage have not been explored in a transnational and/or migratory setting by scholars. It is found that factors such as lower levels of education and consanguineous or close kin marriages are likely to exacerbate the weak positions of husbands.

Of the total 62 migrant husbands who participated in the study, all reported having experienced verbal abuse, and 47 had experienced physical abuse at the hands of their wives and/or in-laws and/or employers. The high levels of abuse indicate migrant husbands' silence and invisibility, which juxtaposes with the broader narrative wherein Pakistani men are often depicted as powerful patriarchs. The findings also demonstrate that migrant husbands can occupy liminal states over long periods of time, and that, by extension, the migrant male body can then be viewed as a critical space and social location, within which the past, present, and future unfold simultaneously and upon which migration takes place. Given the paucity of research vis-à-vis the vulnerable positions of migrant husbands, and their experiences as survivors of domestic violence, the ethnography makes a valuable contribution to the field of men and masculinity studies.

In the third part of the chapter, I consider the implications of domestic violence against migrant husbands for power dynamics within the British Pakistani community. In essence, my research shows that there are multiple patriarchies that exist in the British Pakistani and/or Muslim community, some of which are oppressive to *both* men and women (see also Joseph 1996). I also demonstrate that the transnational dynamic in which citizenship status is a key factor determines relations between and across genders. In some ways, then, British citizenship acts as a symbolic currency that transcends the patriarchal system that is conventionally seen to operate within the British Pakistani Muslim community. Traditional notions of honour and shame, therefore, take on different meanings within this transnational context involving migrant husbands. Specifically, I posit that honour and shame are currencies underpinning the transacting of migrant husbands in this transnational marriage migration arrangement, which result in the subverting of migrant husbands and their masculinities. Overall, this chapter demonstrates that migration, including social migration within marriage, can place masculinity in constant motion.

Spiritual masculinity

The [third chapter](#) of the book explores spiritual masculinity. I begin by contemplating the mobility of masculine identity caused by marriage and migration, the ways that masculinity becomes unsettled, shifts, or is suspended in motion. To counter their perceived weaknesses, I demonstrate that migrant husbands can practise resistive agency (see Holland et al. 1998), by engaging with lyrical music and videos such as 'songs of sorrow', a poetic song form coupled with traditional Pakistani musical instruments, such as the sitar. Though similar to Qawwali in terms of poetic pace, repetition, and the types of musical instruments, 'songs of sorrow' differ from Qawwali in that

they comprise one or sometimes two male singers. This musical compilation, uploaded and shared on YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp group chats, allows migrant husbands to express intimate emotions, experience solidarity, and build a virtual, co-ethnic community. The lyrics of the songs invoke gender dynamics, which establish or reinstate social truths that resonate with the migrant men's pre-existing patriarchal gendered ideals. These songs provide a safe space for migrant husbands to express themselves, similar to scholars who have shown resistance and agency through musical forms for women in different parts of the world (see Raheja and Gold 1994; Abu-Lughod 1990).

The second section of this chapter shows the significance of religiosity in acquiring important forms of religio-social capital, such as trust and solidarity. Focusing on a close reading of the cases of my interviewees, I show that some migrant husbands practise what I refer to as 'spiritual masculinity' in order to rebuild or reinstate their masculinity, by aligning themselves with the holy and/or sacred, within religious Sufi-scapes, which, in turn, are also a product of the transnational movement of ideas and faith traditions. I present a map of Birmingham that shows the Sufi hubs where migrant husbands and British Muslim men gathered weekly to perform prayer, undertake *zikr* (a form of Islamic meditation in which phrases or prayers are repeatedly chanted), and celebrate *mawlid*s (celebrations of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad), but also offer one another brotherly support (see also Morrow 2001: 51; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010: 258). Many of my migrant husband interlocutors cited these hubs and the religious clothing they wear – often brightly coloured turbans or scarves – as providing them with a reconstituting identity, which not only helped them integrate into the community but in some cases also became a symbol of their loyalty to their wives and in-laws. Their religious affiliations were seen as legitimizing them in their community, conveying to their British Pakistani wives and in-laws that they were pious, calm, and respected, and possibly rescuing them from being targets of invasive control and physical harm as a result. In this way, engagement in religious spaces can be seen as transacting resistance and agency.

The final section in this chapter goes on to demonstrate the ways in which some migrant husbands *perform* certain financial tasks to keep up the appearance of being successful transnational patriarchs, which they see as an extension of spiritual masculinity. Financial stability is seen as an indicator of virility, competence, and the ability to perform charitable actions for the benefit of their families and wider community. A key finding emerging throughout the research pertains to the ways in which the wives, sisters, and daughters of migrant husbands gained individual purchasing power as a result of their British citizenship, education, and economic empowerment,

which – in the cases I discuss – they actively chose to draw on in order to help alleviate the hardships of migrant husbands, as their honour and social standing in the community are intricately interwoven with those of their male kin. This finding leads me to argue that honour is not one-dimensional in form or practice within the British Pakistani community. Instead, honour, it seems, is context-dependent, as it works differently within a single household compared to within a community of many households, as well as between married couples compared to a group of people. Further, I argue that the performance of finances demonstrates how both men and women within the British Pakistani community can fall victim to and at the same time employ the guise of patriarchy to further their social stance within the community.

Together, the three overarching forms of masculinity that structure the findings trace the journey of migration that migrant husbands undergo through marriage, but also the journey of migration that their masculine identity, social lives, and marital lives undergo. Therefore, the research provides a nuanced account of the impact of the migration–marriage–masculinity nexus: that they are intricately interwoven, and that migration through space, place, and time simultaneously invokes migration operating in and through the space and place of the body. Ultimately, the approach taken here is one in which the aspirations of migrant husbands are seen as independent entities, which inform the imagined ideals of the transnational patriarch, and through their marriage and migration journeys the book uncovers the meandering nature that their aspirations take, and whether or not they become fulfilled or become something else entirely. Such an approach differs from the current literature, as it takes its starting point the social imaginary and does not assume the linearity of the migration journey between two places.

The findings laid out in this book collectively contribute to men and masculinity studies, migration and diaspora studies, and the anthropology of Islamic and Muslim societies. The overarching outcome of the research, which is discussed further in the Conclusion, is that the research contributes to and paves a way forward for the ‘decolonisation of Muslim men’. In doing so, I draw on a vibrant body of literature that explores South–South relations (Connell 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley 2019), particularly within academic spaces that risk perpetuating the colonial legacy in and through ongoing knowledge production (Kalra 2009; Murrey 2019). By reflecting on my positionality within the academy, wherein, in my view, I have been subjected to discriminatory policies that have attempted to render me mute and marginalised, I find that my positionality is interconnected with that of my interlocutors; therefore, their ability, like mine, to be ‘seen’ and ‘heard’ has been compromised, constituting a form of injustice that

demands remedy. For too long the structures of the academy have failed to accommodate positionalities and viewpoints that may disrupt the hardened ‘Eurocentric’ narrative (see El-Tayeb 2011; Patel 2019; Murrey 2019).

Amid the multiple Souths and Southern voices in the metropole (see also Connell 2007, 2014a; de Sousa Santos 2014), I see myself as an embodiment of the South researching a subaltern community that also embodies, reflects, and extends the South. In many ways, I am ‘doing’ the work of decolonial thought (see also Smith 1999). This is to say that this book represents both a practice and an embodiment of decolonial thought in a postcolonial setting imbued with colonial legacies. My voice and the voices of my interlocutors are all brought to the fore despite the various and multiple forms of structural oppressions faced in and through the course of my doctoral research. As a result, Muslim men at the centre of this research are reoriented within the space of academic knowledge production, as agents with diverse experiences that include vulnerability, instability, and precarity. The goal is to transcend the negative grand narratives through which Muslim men are often depicted by mainstream legal, political, and security-oriented discourses, which silence the lived experiences of Muslim migrant husbands and cast them to a precarious waithood – constantly in between migrant and citizen, patriarch and victim. This book aims to explore these liminal reference points, representations, and states of mind and body, contributing in the process to telling the untold stories of an overlooked, but frequently vilified, migrant community in modern Britain.

Transnational masculinity: the making of patriarchal aspirations across borders

Born and raised in a village outside Dadyal in Azad Kashmir, Imran arrived in Birmingham on a temporary student visa in January 2018. He explained to me that his uncle facilitated his visa application after repeated unsuccessful attempts to find him a suitable British wife. Despite approaching several families within their *biraaderi* (extended kin network) with Imran's marriage proposal for their daughters, his uncle grew frustrated with the mounting number of rejections. The problem, it turned out, was Imran's mother, who, to her son's regret, had upset several relatives in their village. Prospective brides were wary about a marriage that would be overshadowed by a controlling and verbally abusive mother-in-law. Adding to his disappointment was that some potential brides were reluctant to marry Pakistani men from 'back home', due to perceived cultural differences with British-born matches in the diaspora, lower levels of education, and the lack of English fluency – all factors that could spell irregular employment or volatility for the marriage. Contemporary British Pakistani Muslim women, many with university degrees and career track jobs, enjoy more autonomy relative to previous generations of women and are more selective in their choice of mate. Imran explained how these women rejected 'freshies' (i.e. those 'fresh off the boat'), or recently arrived new migrants, as undesirable candidates for marriage. The term carries racist undertones that rise to the level of eugenic sentiment, and has a basis in British citizenship status as a condition of superiority.

Imran told me:

My uncle [in England] funded my education in Pakistan to college level, and made sure that I had clothes that were the same as those that British men wore, like jeans and T-shirts ... [M]y uncle and my elder brothers, who were the sons-in-law of my uncle, would send me pictures of hairstyles that were trending in England ... I would show these to my barber and tell him to copy them ... [M]y uncle and brothers told me that if I looked like a normal British guy the British girls would find me attractive ...

For Imran, his uncles' and brothers' aspiration and desire to facilitate his migration translated into modifying his physical appearance to match that of what a 'normal' British-born Pakistani man would look like. These modifications, I argue, form a series of sub-transactions that lead to the becoming of a migrant husband. When I asked Imran to elaborate on why his uncle and brothers urged him to migrate in the first place, he said:

You know, there's a saying: 'The more arms you have, the better.' They want me to come so I can be their arms, their additional arms ... I can help them, we can help each other ... [I]t's a good image for our family as well if us brothers migrate and stay together in England ...

The metaphor of 'being their arms' is particularly striking. The image resonates with the idea that strength lies in numbers, reinforcing the significance of the patriarchal representation of the family, to have an anchored branch in England that was forged and sustained by close-knit male relatives. The sub-transactions involving bodily modifications, then, result in Imran being transacted by his uncle and brothers in the United Kingdom to acquire greater social capital (Bourdieu 2011).

Narratives such as Imran's provide insight into a complex web of aspirations that are imagined and played out in and through migration journeys. This chapter takes up the question: what does the image of British masculine identity held by migrant husbands and their families signify? How is this image woven into their aspirations of marriage and migration, and masculine performance? Often, individual aspirations of migration cannot be disentangled from those of the kin network and community (Carling and Schewel 2018: 958), as the family can animate and impose ideas about the potential wellspring of opportunities that migration can bring (Collins 2018). Certainly, in the literature on Pakistani migration to the United Kingdom, the role of the family is shown to be pivotal in arranging marriages that can facilitate migration for the next generation of sons and daughters (Werbner 1990; Shaw 2000, 2006). Imran's experience is testament to how familial involvement can be crucial to making migration a reality. What Imran's narrative also sheds new light on, however, is the way in which such aspirations do not take a linear form and can face interruptions and revisions. What implications does such volatility hold for migrant husbands, their aspirations, and the broader British Pakistani diaspora community?

It is thought that each year approximately equal numbers of male and female spouses from the Indian subcontinent are granted settlement in the United Kingdom (Charsley 2012).¹ The literature documenting the experiences of migrant spouses focuses predominantly on the vulnerabilities specific to migrant women. This has created a lag in research that takes a close look at men who migrate through marriage to their wives' or in-laws'

households, described within south Asian communities as *ghar dhamad* (house son-in-law), a denigratory label that implies disempowerment of the migrant husband (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Lyon 1989: 37). Some studies have noted that migrant husbands experience anxiety or unhappiness due to close proximity and dependence on their in-laws' resources (Charsley 2005). More recently research has turned to the neglected subject of migrant husbands and their unique experiences (Charsley and Liversage 2015). But, beyond a few notable exceptions, there remains a dearth of understanding about the nature of the Muslim Pakistani migrant husbands' experience in the United Kingdom.

Scholarly contributions within the field of migration studies from Datta et al. (2009: 864), Carling and Schewel (2018), Scheibelhofer (2018: 1003), and Bakewell and Jónsson (2013) have encouraged me to explore the ways in which migrant husbands set goals for their futures prior to embarking on marriage migration. The prelude to transnational marriage migration – the planning, organization, and sacrifices involved – has very rarely been explored, as scholarship in the field has mainly focused on the aftermath of migration into the country of destination. But this is a worrying oversight, as scholarship in population studies suggests that parental investment in male children in south Asia more broadly is greater than that of female children (Das Gupta 1987; D'Souza and Chen 1980; Chen, Emdadul, and D'Souza 1981; Sen and Sengupta 1983; Dyson and Moore 1983), indicating that migration may involve early gendered investments, which privilege males over females. For instance, Das Gupta (1987) demonstrates that male children in India were given better medical treatment, greater fat content in their food intake, milk, and other commodity food items compared to female children. In line with traditional gender roles, males are deemed worthy of a greater share of the family's resources, as they are expected to become breadwinners and care for their parents during their old age. Borrowing from and extending this literature, we can explore whether migrant husbands are moulded into becoming a migrant husband from an early age, focusing on the emergence of different masculinities and gendered life goals.

Against the backdrop of migration from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to Britain, which has spanned seven decades (Shaw 2000), in this chapter I trace the diversity of experiences of migrant husbands prior to their marriage migration to explore how they are 'made' as both an immigrant category and aspiration, and the performative aspects of their pre-departure preparations. In doing so, I explore the social trajectory travelled by migrant husbands by situating them within their own family history (Nail 2015: 4), and in the myriad social, cultural, and emotion-laden power relations (Pratt and Yeoh 2003; Silvey 2004, 2006) in which they are embedded. I thus steer

away from viewing migration as a singular, insulated decision made in a single point in time, and, rather, view migration as a process, and an ongoing series of negotiations that involve multiple actors.

The *rishta* process

From a historical perspective, the *rishta* (proposal) process within the British Pakistani community has been shaped by the settlement patterns of the diaspora community. In the 1960s and 1970s men, usually between the ages of 18 and 60, arrived from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and settled in industrial towns in Britain where they could find work. This first wave of migration was in response to the shortage of workers in the period after the Second World War (Ballard 1994), which can be interpreted as a transaction between the state and citizens of previous colonies. It is important to note the significance of the historical context of this era. The close proximity of the end of the Second World War (1945) and the Partition of India (1947) created a demand for migrant labourers to rebuild Britain, which was fulfilled by migrants from the newly divided nations within the Indian subcontinent, now no longer under British colonial rule. Although this may characterise migrants from Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to Britain during this time, as hailing from a newly postcolonial era, my position, and the position of this book, is that colonial legacies remain at the centre of post-colonialism, a heartbeat that has endured decades, and is part of the social fabric of the British Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora community today (see also Kalra 2009). The tightly woven threads as part of this social fabric are shown later to form the foundations of in-group power relations in a transnational setting.

The second wave of migration, which unfolded during the 1970s and 1980s, involved migrant men inviting their wives and children to settle with them in the United Kingdom (Kalra 2009). From the 1980s onwards the children of these recently settled families had reached marriageable age, and *rishtas* were forged, often with kin back home, after which spouses would arrive and settle in the country (Kalra 2009; Shaw 2000). Shaw (2000, 2006) has described the *rishta* process as being a family decision informed by transnational factors, such as the desire to provide new economic and social opportunities for the extended family, and raise levels of prosperity and standards of living. Often parents of marriageable-age adolescent children would consider the offspring of their siblings in the home country as potential spouses for their children. One of the benefits of such marriages has been cited by members of the community as ensuring that commodities and resources such as property, land, and gold stay within the family, as

opposed to being inherited by non-kin. As a result, transnational marriage arrangements were transactional in nature, which is supported by broader anthropological literature on marriage (Bossen 1988; Schlegel and Eloul 1988; Harrell and Dickey 1985; Singer 1973; Anderson 2007; Sinke 1999) and marriage migration (Cole 2010; Faier 2007; Kaur 2012; Jackson 2002, 2007; Kojima 2001; Constable 2003; Gardner 1995; Shaw 2001; Pande 2014; Selby 2009; Mooney 2006; Gallo 2006; Charsley 2005).

In more recent literature, young people and their families also cite social values as a consideration when searching for spouses, with kin relations seen as more trustworthy spouses (Shaw and Charsley 2006). Hence, consanguineous (cousin) marriages between British-born Pakistanis and Pakistani nationals were common during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. Women within the diaspora community cite transnational marriage as favourable since their in-laws remain in Pakistan, while they enjoy proximity to their maternal homes and to support systems in Britain (Shaw and Charsley 2006).

In more recent years marrying outside the family to non-kin co-ethnics has increasingly become the norm among British-born Pakistani Muslims, particularly those who have completed their university education, acquired professional skill sets, and enjoy stable employment. Often young couples meet at university and decide the terms of their engagement independently from family elders. Such 'rogue' arrangements were historically (and in many cases still are) a source of shame or embarrassment for the family. Factors such as the lack of parental involvement in the decision-making, the proposal being a 'love' match, and different castes between partners and families can prevent marriages from taking place, and come at the cost of family disownment. Having been born and raised in Birmingham, I personally know of a plethora of such stories within the community. When families distribute wedding invitations, for example, I have heard relatives and neighbours whisper '*Baaru kithis*' ('He/she has found the *rishta* from outside the kin network') or '*Apni marzi kithis*' ('He/she made their own choice [in selecting their spouse]'). Although such marriages are still frowned upon by elders, who favour customary scripts when it comes to marital relationships that are seen to shape the future family tree, they have become more common over successive generations in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri diasporas.

More recently it has been documented that British Pakistani, Kashmiri, and/or Muslim communities are experiencing higher divorce rates (Qureshi, Charsley, and Shaw 2014; Ogilvie 1996). At the same time, there is a crisis of marriageable-age men and women who fail to secure *rishtas* due to changing social and cultural expectations about what constitutes a desirable spouse, or the material terms of a marital arrangement. This crisis is mainly born out of a widening gap between the increasing educational

achievements of women, as a result of which they seek comparably educated partners, and working professional spouses, who share their values and aspirations about gender roles both inside and outside the home. As British Pakistani men do somewhat less well in the education and labour market within the community, women are faced with the prospect of incompatible *rishtas*, or settling for less or sacrificing their dreams of marriage and children. Elsewhere, similar trends have been reported by Singerman (2007), who has shown that young people in the Middle East experience unwanted premarital waitness, as it has become increasingly difficult for men to secure profitable jobs, save for and purchase a home, and finance a wedding, all of which are factors required when making an offer of marriage to a woman's family. Finding themselves in a similar predicament, many British-born Pakistani men are opting to search in Pakistan for a wife, who are possibly more likely to be content with their husband's existing earnings and achievements, rather than wait an undefined period for the possibility of a match in Britain. This is also true of some women within the community who are unable to find a suitable *rishta* in Britain and seek a match in Pakistan. Overall, although transnational marriage remains a valid means to obtain a partner and start a family, rising personal autonomy and factors such as socio-economic status, education, skills, property ownership, and – in some cases – health or disability can limit the possibility of transnational unions for some. This contrasts with previous decades, during which a key motivation of transnational marriage was to strengthen kin relations. One of my interviewees, Sajid, a 35-year-old migrant husband from Birmingham, told me:

My wife had been convicted of manslaughter ... [S]he got into a situation while at university, and she was sentenced to 12 years in prison, of which she completed seven. After she was released, she visited Pakistan and chose to marry me. My parents told me I must agree, as it was a good *rishta* from the UK, and they really wanted me to go to the UK.

Sajid's experience demonstrates that women who may face limited options within the British Pakistani community were able to marry and fulfil their desire to have children with men from Pakistan, whose families were less likely to object on the basis of family history or criminal record, as long as their son would have the coveted opportunity to migrate to the United Kingdom. Although financial reasons are often the motivation for some families in Pakistan to accept a proposal from a British Pakistani woman and/or her family, it is the prospect of citizenship that is seen as a highly desirable status symbol for the family. Since the *rishta* in this instance may well be seen as tainted due to the jail time the bride-to-be had completed, her successful marriage irrespective of her criminal record, and Sajid's secured

migration to the United Kingdom, carry the hallmarks of a transaction from which both parties benefit.

Migrant husbands such as Sajid often do not have the option to reject marriage proposals from the United Kingdom, which demonstrates a lack of choice and agency inherent to the soon-to-be migrant husband, at the outset of the marriage migration process. It is uncommon to protest or refuse such a *rishta* as the prospect of migration signifies a 'return' to the 'White man's land' decades after the end of colonial rule in India (then also Pakistan), which is idealised by many in Pakistan as the ultimate form of reclaiming power and social status. Much of the literature in migration and diaspora studies focusing on the British Pakistani community misses this critical link to the colonial roots of outward migration aspirations, which has been entrenched within the social imaginaries and lives of Pakistani nationals and their families and passed down through the generations. This is also echoed by Kalra (2009: 118), who argues that we must understand not only the lives of racialised minorities within local race-relation paradigms but also the British colonial context from which the experiences of racialised minorities emerge. Muneeb, a 38-year-old resident in Birmingham who had migrated from Jhelum in Pakistan, told me:

People here [in Pakistan] aspire to be like the Whites; they think going to England is going to make them like the Whites. But just being in the land doesn't mean you automatically live in Buckingham Palace; we come here, and we are mopping floors and washing dishes in restaurants ... England and the queen is such a huge thing in Pakistan; I guess when they were there back in the day they left an impression of power, and now migrating here is the only thing that can make you close to that power and identity.

Whiteness and racialised conceptions of power and identity are intricately linked with the desire for British citizenship and social status for Pakistani migrant men, which has roots within the colonial era, the legacy of British colonial rule in India, and the history of Partition (see also Dumont 1980; Kalra 2009). At this point it is necessary to question the significance of disadvantaged 'brown' men and their families, seeking honour by migrating to the 'White' country of their former colonisers. Although, at first glance, it may be seen as disempowering, on closer inspection of the interviews with participants I note that there was little reference, if at all, to Britain's colonial rule in the subcontinent. Instead, in their narratives, migrant husbands viewed Britain akin to the way in which the United States is hailed through the lens of the 'American Dream', despite Britain bearing some responsibility for the current ills of their country of birth. Clearly, there is a social and moral contradiction here, and one that is not exceptional to the case of Pakistani and Azad Kashmiri migrants. For my interlocutors, however, this

contradiction did not exist, partly due to a lack of education, but mostly due to the power and status that could be achieved by migrating, and eventually becoming a British citizen. The colonial legacy of the powerful and respected White man, coupled with the power of whiteness and the privileges associated with it, continue to influence Pakistani migration to Britain.

It should be noted that there are many young persons within the diaspora community who reject the prospect of an arranged transnational marriage. Social media platforms such as Muzz (formerly Muzmatch) and Slaam have been launched in the United Kingdom in recent years, catering to the needs of young Muslims seeking marriage. Within Birmingham, several ‘community matchmakers’ have begun to gain traction in recent years, with the Birmingham Central Mosque also leading a popular matchmaking service, with over 300 members. I have often heard elders express the view that ‘*rishte milna barra mushkil hai*’ (‘to find a *rishta* is so difficult’), compelling families and young people to employ creative approaches to matchmaking. For example, one way to strike up a potential match is for men and women to attend singles events with a chaperone, often held in popular restaurants and hotel venues, designed to allow networking and socialising so as to signal their availability and interest to potential suitors. Social media sites such as Facebook and TikTok are also increasingly being employed to advertise *rishtas* in the community.

‘Making’ the migrant husband

A family effort

In the wider literature, the family unit has been acknowledged as being able to provide individuals with a form of collective identity of the wider kinship and community (Goulbourne and Solomos 2003: 332; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 250–251). In particular, young people’s ambitions have been documented as developing in line with those of their parents (Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 251). This theme was echoed throughout my research, as migrant husbands who took part in my interviews were told by their families from a young age that they would marry a British girl and migrate to the United Kingdom, which led to them to ‘dream’ about migration long before they were of marrying age. Asim is a 32-year-old migrant husband from Jhelum, in the north of Punjab province in Pakistan, who arrived in the United Kingdom at the age of 26 and is educated to sixth-form level. During our conversation, he told me:

Throughout my teenage years I used to stay up at night thinking about what it would be like to go to the UK and live there ... to work there, coming back to

Pakistan on visits ... [M]y parents would talk about the plan to ask my uncle's daughter's hand in marriage ... my hopes and dreams were building every time they spoke about ... I think, because I was the only son, they really wanted me to be in the UK to be better off, so I could support them in the long term ...

According to my interviewees, parental aspirations played a large role in their eventual marriage migration, which was often initiated by asking for the hands in marriage of suitable British girls within their kin and friendship networks. Armaan, a 29-year-old migrant husband from Kotli educated to degree level, arrived in the United Kingdom in 2019. His case was exemplary of how influential the aspirations of family members can be in shaping a man's marriage migration journey. He told me:

My mother asked for her brother's daughter's hand in marriage for me when she was born. It was publicly known that Sarish and I were to marry. My parents had told everybody ... my mother was adamant that she wanted nobody else to be my wife, except for her brother's daughter ...

When asked to elaborate on his mother's reasons for choosing Sarish as a bride for him, Armaan said:

She wanted to strengthen the relationship with her brother, and make it stronger ... also for me to go to England ... [S]he thought it was best if I was looked after by her brother, which she expected him to do because of their close sibling bond ...

Some families decide to ask for the hands in marriage for their sons once they have reached a mature age and began to plan for the future. Suleman told me:

Marrying a British relative and going to live in the UK was always something that was talked about because so many people in our extended family did that ... [B]ut when I started my college studies, my parents wanted to make sure my future was going to be stable, so they talked about the different *rishta* options and families they could approach.

In Suleman's case, his entering sixth form symbolised his 'coming of age', proximity to adulthood, and therefore marriage, which triggered hopes that he might cross the threshold as a migrant husband. Nevertheless, Hamza, a 30-year-old migrant husband from Islamabad, who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2017, told me:

My family had always seen it [marrying a British woman] as an option, but I was not really bothered. If it was meant to be, it would be ... In all honesty, I didn't think it would happen, because we didn't have any immediate relatives in England, but we knew the families of friends, and extended relatives who had relatives in England. My parents did ask for help from their relatives to send proposals to certain families and ask for any one of their

daughters – I mean, they wouldn't name anyone, they were happy with anyone from England, but their efforts were not very successful ... I was surprised when my wife decided she wanted to marry me ... [W]e had met after a chance encounter on my way to the city one morning ...; after that her family began to visit our house and we visited their house, and eventually the marriage talks took place and we were agreed ... [M]y family were thrilled ... their prayers had been answered.

The complex roles played by the families of migrant husbands in aspiring for transnational marriages and taking tangible steps to make them a reality are present during various life stages, underlining Carling and Schewel's argument that individual hopes to migrate cannot be disentangled from those of kin and community (2018: 958; see also Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 251). It is possible to see how this materialises through the personal narratives of Arman, Suleman, and Hamza, whose families – albeit at different steps along their journey to manhood – worked to achieve their deep-rooted aspirations to have their sons marry a British national and migrate to England. Hamza's case shows how young people of both genders are more mobile in towns and villages in Pakistan, interacting and socialising in ways that expand the range of their marital choices. The action(s) on the families' part also show that migration is not a singular decision frozen in a particular moment in time, often shortly prior to departure, but, rather, involves long-term thought and planning (de Haas 2011). For many Pakistani men, the path to becoming a migrant husband involves collective familial effort over the span of several years.

Given the vast sacrifices that are often necessary to send a son as a migrant to Britain (see also Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 251), the meaning that migration holds for the families involved merits close attention. In some instances, transnational marriage is motivated by economic imperatives, placing sons in the traditional roles of breadwinner and caregiver for the extended family (see also Quaglia and Cobb 1996). Horváth (2008: 773) notes that migration can be seen as a necessary, even quasi-compulsory, social act for some populations, such as youth from rural areas of Romania. In this way, migration can acquire a symbolic function (Meyer 2018) and may not be about migration of people across borders per se, but more about the ideas that people share about the prospect of migration (Easthope and Gabriel 2008: 173). For the migrant husbands' families discussed here, migration was seen as a means to higher social status and a badge of honour, strengthening foundations of support in older age and complementing dreams of stable economic futures. Their aspirations were connected to social mobilisation (Lowe and Krahn 2000), which raises questions about the conventional view that economic factors are the main drivers of migration. In many cases, honour and status can be seen to supplement, or even supersede, the economic benefits accrued by migration.

Health and well-being

Migrant husbands told me how their families would ensure they were physically healthy (see also Das Gupta 1987) to increase the likelihood of being able to marry a British national. Armaan told me:

At about age 16 I was not getting any taller, which concerned my parents, as they wanted me to be at least matching in height to the girl they had chosen for me. They kept taking me to the doctors, who would prescribe vitamins and advised that I needed the best food ... I ate a lot of fish, milk, and eggs to ensure my bones and muscles were strong ... [I]t didn't help that Sarish had grown tall before me, so when she came to Pakistan, in 2005, she was at least a foot taller than me and my parents became very worried; they thought she wouldn't want to marry me if I remained shorter ...

Armaan's narrative demonstrates how his parents' aspiration for him to marry Sarish and migrate to the United Kingdom became embodied through the physical changes his parents wished to invoke in him. This further highlights the importance of the image of the ideal migrant husband. This is explored further in the [next chapter](#), but it is important to consider here the kind of image that parents and families cultivated about what the migrant husband should look like, how he should behave, and the brand of masculinity he was expected to embody; these ideas and ideals shaped the ways in which he was schooled, fed, and dressed in anticipation for his marriage migration. Thus, the migrant husband can be seen as the sum of a series of transactions pertaining to body modifications, apparel, education, and social, cultural, and symbolic capital.

Some families recognised that good health was an integral part of successful marriage migration, and therefore concealed the health issue of their son from British wives and their families. Selina, a 24-year-old British Muslim woman of Pakistani heritage who had recently graduated from university with a double degree in sociology and criminology, told me that her sister's first marriage was to a relative in their village in Pakistan. On the wedding night, however, Selina's sister witnessed her new husband having a seizure, prompting her to rush out of their bedroom and call for help. She was told a short while later that her husband experienced seizures on a regular basis. Selina's sister demanded to be taken back to her parents' home, which was a few minutes away, that very night without consummating her marriage. Selina's sister told her parents what had happened and demanded a divorce as the family had deceived her by concealing her husband's serious ailment. Selina's sister returned to the United Kingdom a few days later before filing for divorce. Similarly, Tahmeena, a 22-year-old British Muslim woman who self-identified as Kashmiri as her family roots were in Azad Kashmir, and was currently studying for a degree in psychology, told me that her sister

had had a similar experience, as her husband's learning disabilities were hidden by her in-laws prior to marriage. Tahmeena explained that, when her sister met with her husband prior to their marriage, she had not noticed suspicious signs that something might be wrong. Tahmeena's sister filed for divorce, indicating the failed transactional elements involved in presenting her then husband as a suitable spouse. Five years later Tahmeena's sister remarried her British-born first cousin, who also lived in Birmingham.

These cases demonstrate that health conditions were at times an obstacle for successful transnational marriages, and therefore were concealed from brides and their families in a bid to ensure the marriages went ahead. Understandably, brides and their families viewed the concealment of health conditions as betrayal and deception. As Tahmeena explained:

The fact that they kept this hidden just shows how much they want their sons to get to the UK; they don't consider the girls' feelings ... I mean, we want healthy husbands – that's not too much to ask for ... [B]ut they think that just because we are married to them that we will stay married because of the shame associated with divorce, but nowadays we don't care ...: if something is not right, we won't stick around; we will divorce, and we're not scared to do that ... [I]t was like that for girls back in the day, say, 20 years ago, but not now ...

Tahmeena has provided significant insight into the shifting dynamics of the British Pakistani community, particularly in relation to female autonomy and self-determination around marital choice. Views regarding honour and shame associated with divorce can continue to shape the way in which transnational marriages are conducted, however, especially in circumstances in which migrant husbands suffer from health conditions. Tahmeena's and Selina's experiences demonstrate the existence of competing priorities and agency of different people involved in these relationships-in-becoming. Although some prospective migrant husbands were not aspiring to migrate, others clearly were. Some parents actively planned their son's marriage from a young age, while others did so later in their life. Sometimes these plans did not come to fruition for different reasons, including because chosen marriage partners resisted and rejected partners who did not meet their ideas of a 'good', 'able-bodied', or 'ideal' husband. The brides' implicit criteria for what counts as a suitable mate reveals certain prejudices around health issues and mental and physical disability that may be more pronounced or seen as permissible given the context of arranged marriages.

Grooming and appearance

Armaan spoke about the sudden and drastic changes his parents made to his wardrobe when Sarish, then 13 years old, arrived in Pakistan for a holiday with her parents in 2004:

While everyone knew that my parents had asked for Sarish's hand in marriage for me, my mother's step-sister's in-laws asked for her hand in marriage for their son too ... It caused a lot of arguments ... When Sarish was leaving to return to the UK, my parents decided that they would make a visit to the airport to see her off ... [W]e went to the shop and bought a shirt and jeans and new black shoes ... [T]he journey was very long, and it was the middle of August, which made wearing jeans very difficult in the heat. At the airport, while we were saying our goodbyes, my mum and dad took me in front of Sarish so that she could see how I was dressed ... [T]hey [had] told me before that I need to shake her hand, so I put my hand out and we shook hands ... [T]hey wanted her to remember me in jeans and a shirt so that she knew that I was capable to be a British husband ...

Armaan's outward appearance was carefully constructed by his family to align with what they believed was synonymous with the British masculine image, which they anticipated would lead Sarish to believe that Armaan was capable of adapting to life in a new country. The embodiment of aspiration for their son's marriage and migration translated into seeking the approval of a child-age girl who was on holiday with her parents. Competition over British Pakistani girls and women can lead to premature steps to secure a *rishta* to confirm a future marriage migration arrangement, despite the potential bride and groom being under-age.

After a new haircut, and dressed in his best clothes, Imran told me he would pose for photographs against 'natural backdrops' such as flowers, or in front of his parents' *khoti* (mansion) in Azad Kashmir, built using his uncle's remittances. Once the images were captured, Imran would promptly share them via WhatsApp with his uncle and brothers in the United Kingdom.

My uncle, brothers, and my sisters-in-law would put my picture as their display picture on WhatsApp Messenger so that, when family members [in the UK] would message them, they would view my profile picture and see that I was a suitable person for their daughter.

It was anticipated that, by visually presenting Imran as 'modern', he would be seen as a potential groom no different from British-born and -raised co-ethnics, making him an eligible prospect for their daughters. Social media and new forms of technology have become critical conduits of matchmaking in the contemporary *rishta* process.

During fieldwork I was contacted by Aisha, a 26-year-old woman born in a village near Mirpur, Azad Kashmir, and living in Birmingham since 2015, who was trying to facilitate her brother Jameel's marriage and migration to the United Kingdom. Aisha and her brother were interested in arranging a marriage with their uncle's daughter, Amina, who had graduated and

worked as a teacher. Aisha told me she would send money to her brother in Pakistan to ensure he looked his best, instructing him to purchase sunglasses and a silver chain to wear around his neck. She also sent him an iPhone so that he would be able to take high-quality images of himself. I asked Aisha whether I could interview her brother via Skype. Jameel told me how he was well equipped with social media, digital technology, and computing, as he had taken courses at college to become literate in this area to increase his chances of acquiring employment upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom. He also told me:

I really like Amina; she is very beautiful and she is also educated ... I sent her a friend request on Facebook and regularly comment on her photos but she doesn't talk to me or respond to me ... I post my photos on Facebook so that she can see me ... see that I am good-looking, well dressed, well travelled, and well educated. I go to Faisal mosque in Islamabad, where there is beautiful scenery in the mountains and take pictures there ... I make sure I wear the sunglasses and the silver chain and rings my sister told me to wear to look good ...; hopefully she will see that I am suitable for her ...

Jameel's narrative reveals the importance of social media as a persuasive tool to 'market' or 'transact' oneself, showcasing a kind of masculinity that may contribute to the achievement of marital and migration goals. Jameel told me that, by marrying Amina, he would strengthen the relationship between his father and Amina's father, who were stepbrothers. He admired his uncle, who had successfully settled in the United Kingdom and established a profitable business. He saw that Amina was well respected in the wider family and community; she was well educated and worked as a teacher, and was a dedicated daughter, having looked after her father when he was ill in hospital. If he were to become Amina's husband and his uncle's son-in-law, Jameel would acquire higher social status and honour not just within his family and community in Pakistan but also within his family network in Birmingham. Jameel's experience shows the inner workings of 'aspiration-in-the-making' for a 'migrant husband-to-be'. His interview also shows the role played by family members beyond just the parents, in actively encouraging a particular performance of the self and the relationship between siblings in marriage negotiations. This points to the diverse identity markers and structures that frame people's experiences and their respective abilities to have not only aspirations and desires but also different capacities to act and follow through with these aspirations. In what follows, I show how the image of migrant husbands communicated through various social media platforms is connected to the image of the 'British man', which is constantly reworked into the embodied experiences of migrant husbands.

The transnational patriarch

Although the majority of my informants had already married and migrated to the United Kingdom, as a result of which they shared with me their *retrospective* views about the image of what it meant to be a British man, I also spoke to a small number of migrant husbands-to-be, who were, at the time of the interview(s), still residing in Pakistan. Jameel, who wanted to marry his cousin Amina, spoke to me in detail about what it meant for him to become a migrant husband and subsequently become British:

You know, going to England is a big thing; it would mean you are a successful and powerful man. It would mean that nobody could bother you, threaten to take your land from you, or tell you what to do. You would be the boss ... You wouldn't need to rely on anybody here [in Pakistan] either ...

For Jameel, whose family belong to the lower echelons of Pakistani society due to their socio-economic and caste status, migration to the United Kingdom symbolised power and higher socio-economic status, arming him with the credentials to defuse those who would belittle him or confiscate his father's property. The risk of this was high, as Jameel and his family reside in the home of his mother's sister, who migrated through marriage to live in the United Kingdom with her husband, and thus lack a family home of their own. Although they own a small portion of land, the family's financial circumstances were such that they could not build a home. The empty land was then at risk of being taken over by members of higher castes, who asserted greater power in the region. To be able to act with such self-authority would garner respect and honour in the eyes of his family and community (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130). In this way, migrating to the United Kingdom is symbolic of what one could *become* (Collins 2018: 974), and tethered to this symbolism of becoming were long-held aspirations and desires of what that would bring (Carling and Schewel 2018).

In turn, for Khalid, who had migrated to the United Kingdom in 2015 after marrying a distant relative two years previously, the idea of becoming a British man was similarly appealing:

Many people from our town had migrated to the UK, so it was quite normal to want to do that too ... [W]e would see these men who had gone to the UK come back with their wives and children to visit, and buy cars, and enjoy their holidays ... they would renovate their homes or even build mansions ... [I]f you go around in Dadyal, you will see *khotiya* [mansions] everywhere that have been built by these men who have gone to the UK and they sent money back to build them ...; the reminders of what it means to go to England are everywhere.

For Khalid, migration to the United Kingdom had visibly transformed the physical and symbolic spaces surrounding him, exemplified through rows of lavish mansions, replete with fanciful columns, elaborate facades, and gold-painted ornaments looming over the neighbourhood behind tall iron gates. Khalid shared with me images of his uncle's mansion on WhatsApp Messenger, explaining how his uncle's father had owned a modest house with four rooms, a kitchen, and one bathroom. The newly erected mansions occupy a larger-than-life space in the migrants' social imaginary, as an ongoing reminder of what could be obtained through transnational marriage migration. In this way, conceptions of masculinity have transformed over the years in response to the migratory trajectories and capital accumulation of pioneer generations, who had invested in improving their property, wealth, and family's living standards in their home countries, all of which elevated social and symbolic capital (see also Bourdieu 2011). The symbolism attributed to migration in the early 1950s and 1960s for migrant men, women, and families no longer holds the same meaning for those who aspire to migrate today.

Saleem, who migrated to the United Kingdom in 2005, told me:

Going to England meant that you could be this man that was doing well and achieving success in England and in Pakistan ... [I]t meant that you could be this man that was looking after family in England and in Pakistan by sending money back home, and, because of this, people would respect him more.



Figure 1.1 A mansion built by Khalid's uncle in Azad Kashmir.
Photo © the author.

Through these narratives, it becomes evident that migration holds high symbolic currency, enabling the emergence of a particular type of man who wields power in England as well as within his home and extended family networks in Pakistan. This image of the all-powerful British man merges and mingles with expectations around masculinity in Pakistan, producing a unique male identity that I term the *transnational patriarch*. The transnational patriarch is, as my interviewees explained, a migrant husband success story who obtained economic and financial success there, sending home remittances and a level of wealth that was hitherto unimaginable had he stayed in Pakistan. Related features of the image of the transnational patriarch depict him as a loyal family man and father figure. Success in these two geographic and imagined areas – the home country and the country of settlement – are seen to produce the highest form of respect and family honour (see also Skeggs 1997; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130), which line up with pre-existing ideals of manhood and masculinity in the social and cultural worlds of Pakistan. The transnational patriarch represents the pinnacle of masculine identity that migrant husbands aspired to before, during, after, and throughout their experiences of marriage, migration, and settlement. To better understand the workings of this distinctive masculinity, in the following section of this chapter I identify three elements that together make up the building blocks of the transnational patriarch: businessman, family man, and respected man.

The businessman

Obtaining financial and economic success in Britain was highly valued by migrant husbands, as it meant sending remittances to their families in Pakistan as well as providing for their wives and children. Put differently, remittances were a form of transactions that indicated economic and business success, and enabled the migrant husband to provide for his family in the home country. As Ashraf told me:

When I came to England I worked very hard ... I worked in the local butcher shop and also worked as a taxi driver ... I was thinking the more money I had the better it would be for me, because I could send it to my family in Pakistan to help them pay the bills for the house and make sure we lived comfortably as a family here [in England] too ...

Ali told me about his transformation from an employee to a businessman and what this meant for him:

When I first came to England I was working at a sweet shop, and then I moved to working in restaurants and takeaways. I worked for many years and sent money to my parents in Pakistan ... [T]hrough the money we were able to

plaster the houses, because they were just made of bricks before that ... [W]e then painted the house too [and] it made my father very happy ... [A]fter about eight years of working for others I thought to buy a takeaway business. When I got this business, I sponsored my father to visit the UK, and he stayed here for six months ... [I]t was the first time someone had been sponsored from our village to England like this, and the first time someone from our extended family, including those that had come to the England before I did, ran their own business.

Ali's narrative demonstrates that owning a business becomes a springboard from which further social achievements can be transacted, such as being able to sponsor family visas to support their visits to England (see also Mooney 2006), which acquire greater social esteem in the eyes of the wider community.

For Rasheed, owning a business transformed the power dynamics in his tense relationship with his father-in-law. He told me:

It was when I started my first business that things changed. Before that I was under my father-in-law's *muthi* [fist] – he controlled what I did and when I did it – but I saved up over the years, and so did my wife, and started my own local grocery store ... [M]y father-in-law was shocked; he thought I was going to work for him and be his slave forever ... but I was not going to do that ... [I]t made everyone think highly of me, and my parents were very proud too ...; they held a *hatham* [congregational commemoration prayer] on the day of the opening to pray for success of the business, to which they invited the members of the entire village.

Rasheed's narrative shows that being a business owner facilitated his social maturity and coming into his own as a migrant, pushing him past his liminal status, and freed him from the powerful grip of his father-in-law. By starting his own business, he was able to 'create a name for himself' – as he put it – which brought him honour across his transnational family networks in Britain and in Pakistan. Importantly, Rasheed described his experience as escaping the 'fist' of his father-in-law and ceasing to be his 'slave', indicating a previously subordinate and derogatory relationship in the household. Central to this narrative is the belief that, if the migrant husband breaks away from the grip of the father-in-law, he can claim his autonomous self and grow his personal reputation – all transactions stemming from his business success. The alternative is failure: remaining within his father-in-law's orbit, which only contributes to his image as a transnational patriarch rather than the migrant himself. More often than not, folded within this site of power struggle is the migrant husband's determination to gain British citizenship, earn enough to acquire land and property for his family, secure sustainable employment, and achieve marital success – his *izzat* within the community – along with physical and mental health and well-being.

Although these excerpts from migrant husbands' life history narratives to some extent speak to the conventional view of migration being driven by economic factors (Lee 1966; Harris and Todaro 1970), it is important to recognise that the economic gains for these migrant husbands were not the sole motivation for marriage migration. Rather, the economic gains served as stepping stones to acquiring increased honour and status within their family networks and communities, and, as a result, achieving the status of a successful transnational patriarch. It is not financial gain or migration per se that migrant husbands and their families aspired to; it is what they signify and the currency they convert and transact into – namely honour, respect, and status. In this way, then, migration is not an end but, rather, a means to an end (Carling 2014).

The family man

Migrant husbands spoke in detail about their sense of responsibility to their families both in the United Kingdom and in Pakistan. Rasheed, for instance, told me:

We saved for two years to open our grocery store. I wanted my wife and child to be comfortable first, and for my parents in Pakistan to be happy and have everything they needed ... [I]f I [had] started a business by borrowing money, which I did consider, I would have been stuck between my family responsibilities and paying off the debt – you know what it's like when people lend you money: they don't care; they want it back straight away ... Then I would have lost sight of my ambition to start a business, and focused on having to pay debt off ...

In turn, Ali, who had facilitated his father's migration to England after he opened his own takeaway business, told me:

My father was elderly when I left him [to come to England], when I could have been his support – his arms ... I sent money back regularly, but it is not the same thing as having your parents with you ... [W]hen my father came to England, I made sure he was treated like a king ... [H]e deserved it ...: he had worked all his life to feed us and made sure we were happy even with the very little he did have ...

Ali's father passed away shortly after returning to Pakistan from a visit to England. Ali recalled how grateful he was for being able to spend precious time together but that his father's absence would always be a hole in his heart that could never be filled. Ali told me that his younger siblings were left without a father, which compelled him to step up to ensure that he

looked after them and his mother. His youngest sibling was 13. He told me how he enrolled his brother at a reputable school in the city nearby, and later went on to fund both his college education and his wedding.

I had a lot of pressure to make sure I was there for my siblings and my mother ... I spent a lot of money ... [N]ow my own children have grown up, and they say to me: 'What have you done for us? You have given all your money to your siblings, who do not even respect you today ...' I struggle; maybe I did spend a lot of money on my family and did not save for my children's futures ..., but at that time I could not have neglected my family ... I feel very bad that I cannot provide for my children today ...; circumstances changed so much because I lost my business ...

Ali's life history narrative demonstrates the way in which migrant husbands can be caught between the different sets of responsibilities that arise from being a transnational patriarch, and the ways in which they can often conflict, leaving them to experience relationship breakdowns with members of their families on either side and/or both sides of the transnational field. In contrast, Saleem told me:

It was really important to me that my family in Pakistan were looked after properly. I did not want to be enjoying luxuries like heating and laundry in England while my family experienced the cold and washed clothes by hand ...; we did that for a long time, but I didn't want them to suffer anymore. So, after a few months of working, I sent money to my father to buy a generator to ensure we always had electricity even when we had electrical cuts, that we had a fridge, washing machine, and other basic utilities ... [M]y brother came to England after me when he married, but he did not have to do this because I had already done it ... [I]t's what the eldest do; the responsibility is on us ...

The provision of care for family members in both the United Kingdom and Pakistan is an important component of the identity of the transnational patriarch. If family members in both geographical locations were well looked after, and cared for, having benefited from migrant husbands' remittances, it would be a testament to the migrant husbands' loyalty and, thus, would transact increased respect and honour (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130). Ali's and Saleem's narratives also begin to provide an insight into the emotional dimension of migration (see also Datta et al. 2009: 863; Meyer 2018: 1037), which offers nuance in better understanding migrant husbands' experiences against the backdrop made up of dominant negative portrayals of Pakistani and/or Muslim men. The emotional aspect of their experiences are explored in detail in subsequent chapters.

The respected man

For a migrant husband to become a successful transnational patriarch, my interlocutors argued that it was important for their achievements to translate into respect and honour within the wider family network and community (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008), both in the United Kingdom and in Pakistan. The narratives presented thus far indicate that the construction of mansions, businesses, and expanded purchasing power are examples of how migrant husbands worked to make their achievements 'seen'.

Having arrived in the UK in 1992 at the age of 20, Ali told me he felt it was time to build a *khoti* (mansion) in Pakistan:

I brought land very cheaply in Islamabad in 2009. It's almost ten years now, and the land has gone up in price ...: I bought it for £4,000 but now it is worth £40,000 ... I want to build a house there ...; I also have land in Dadyal that is five acres ... [M]y business was not doing very well, so I sold it; I do not have enough money at the moment to build the house, but I am hoping to build one soon ...

Ali also told me about the importance of moving away from the village in Dadyal, Azad Kashmir, to Islamabad to send a message to his *biraaderi* that he was wealthy and held high social status. The process of double migration, not just from Pakistan to the United Kingdom but also from the village in Pakistan to the city, demonstrates dual upward social mobility within this transnational field. Migrant husbands such as Ali often seek to improve their social status and migrant identity in both sending and receiving states, which can amplify their financial and social burdens.

Hamza told me:

A few years ago my father had a heart attack and was admitted to hospital in Lahore. I had to go back ...; if I did not go people would probably spit at me and say that I had abandoned my father and my duties as a son.

Hamza's retelling of his father's illness indicates the significance of travelling back to Pakistan to be at his father's bedside. If he had not been seen to do so, Hamza would have been viewed as a disloyal son who had abandoned his father in his time of need, and therefore would not have qualified for the highest form of honour and respect. Anxious to avoid this, Hamza went to great lengths to put together funds to purchase a plane ticket to Pakistan, which involved borrowing money from his friends. The journey to achieve the aspirations and dreams of the transnational patriarchal identity can therefore be met with interruptions, pauses, detours, and starts and stops.

Just as the actions of the migrant husband can bestow him with a sense of honour, the behaviour of relatives can damage his carefully maintained

reputation. During one of my many interviews with Zahid, he recounted his mother's and sister's actions, which had upset him greatly.

I received a phone call from the shopkeeper, Talib, in our village, who asked me to settle the debt of my mother and sister. I didn't understand what he was saying at first, but then he explained ...: he told me that my mother and sister were taking household food and groceries from his store and promised they will pay him later because they did not have money ... I was furious! I told Talib that I send money to them every month. I told Talib I would pay the debt off immediately, but I am so furious because they have dishonoured me ... [E]veryone in our village must think that I do not send money to them, that I leave them to starve!

Zahid's retelling of his mother's and sister's actions indicates the significance of family members being seen to benefit from the migrant husband's marriage and migration to qualify for honour and status. There are constant reputation management exercises conducted by migrant husbands to ensure that their *izzat* is not harmed. Such careful and detailed attention to shaping and reshaping the intricacies of their honour demonstrates how deeply implicated honour and masculinity are, and that performance of the output identity of this dynamic is continuously monitored. We also learn about the extremely fragile nature of this connection between honour and masculinity and the image of the transnational patriarch, through which these are packaged.

Becoming British

Political and legal discourses employed within and around the subject of migration, such as visa categories, asylum or refugee status ('illegal' or 'legal'), time restrictions imposed on certain visas, and requirements for lodging immigration applications, are determined by states and/or governments. The vocabulary and terms designating power or disempowerment determine the ways in which discourses acquire meaning (see Whorf 1956). This is significant for our understanding of migration, which has largely been produced by discourses of authority defined by states and their institutions. For example, conventional understandings of migration assume a linear journey demarcated by start and end points between two geographical points on a map corresponding to certain outcomes that can be statistically or qualitatively measured (see Carling and Schewel 2018). Not all migration experiences can be scrutinised according to pre-established frameworks and discourses, however. Migration journeys can involve unpredictability, instability, and precarity, causing migrants to feel vulnerable and leaving

indelible marks on who they become over the course of their heterogeneous experiences. Indeed, more recently migration has been understood as a transformative process in which migrants' place in the world, their ideas about themselves, and possibilities for the future are reworked (see also Castles and Miller 2009).

Thus far, we know that *becoming* a transnational patriarch through marriage and migration is a desirable masculine identity due to a range of symbolic meanings attached to migration, which speaks directly to recent understandings about migration entailing a transformative element for migrants (Castles and Miller 2009). The narratives shared have provided insights into the stages of migration, particularly those prior to embarking on the migratory journey. The first-hand interviews, relayed in the migrant husbands' own words, offer glimpses into their experiences upon arriving in Birmingham. For instance, Rasheed's narrative demonstrates that starting his own business was testament to his coming into his own as a mature migrant, rather than living in the shadow of his father-in-law. Both Rasheed's and Ali's narratives demonstrate a time lapse between their initial arrival and when they were able to start their own businesses, which speaks to the inherent transformation many men experience from newcomer to transnational patriarch. This time lapse, during which migrant husbands can encounter and experience a plethora of social circumstances, can impact their aspirations in different ways. It would be simplistic to assume a linear transformation process after which migrant husbands arrive at their aspired masculine ideal of the transnational patriarch, as there are many variables – such as citizenship, family and household dynamics, and employment experiences – that can affect the ways in which the status of transnational patriarch is achieved. I now focus on the experiences of migrant husbands after marriage and migration to better understand the shifts in the aspirations that migrant husbands held prior to marriage and migration, and, by extension, how their masculinity is shaped and performed in their lives.

Waiting to become 'British'

Prior to their marriage migration, there seemed to be an expectation among many men and their families that the act of marriage would render them British citizens instantaneously. Khalid told me:

I always thought, once I get married, that's it: I would be British because I married a British woman; but you realise it is not like that at all. I waited a very long to be invited to the UK, because of all the paperwork and having to pass my English test and tuberculosis test ... [W]hen I got here there were so many more things to do to become British in terms of the paperwork ...

Khalid spoke to me in detail about the preparation required to submit a spousal visa application to the UK Home Office, which he had not expected prior to his marriage. As a result, he entered a period of wait-hood (Singerman 2007; Inhorn 2018) before being able to reunite with his wife in Britain and obtain his status – and the aspirations tied to this – as a migrant husband. This first encounter with the British state, embodied in bureaucratic rules and regulations, often leaves the migrant feeling powerless. The migrant husband can experience frailty, having lost control over the path of his aspirations – intimately linked with his perception of masculine identity – to a range of influential external actors, including state immigration institutions, his new wife, and his in-laws. In this way, the migrant husband can be seen as being the site of transactions by the state, through immigration rules and regulations.

For Asad, who married his cousin's daughter in 2015, this insecure wait-hood period, which came after his marriage but prior to his migration, was incredibly stressful. A year after his marriage tensions were rife between him and his wife, who was at the time working as a waitress in an Indian restaurant in Birmingham, so that she could legally submit the spousal visa application to the Home Office. During our first Skype interview, Asad explained that, soon after his wife had acquired a new job at the restaurant, her attitude towards him changed. She would no longer telephone him, answer his calls, or take an interest in him. He attempted to speak to her parents, who consoled him by stating that his wife was simply too busy and exhausted to answer his calls, and that he should not worry. During this time Asad regularly communicated with his brothers-in-law through WhatsApp Messenger, who were younger than his wife. One day, at 11 p.m. UK time (4 a.m. Pakistan time), he asked his brother-in-law whether his sister had returned from work, to which he replied that she had not. His brother-in-law informed him that a fellow male colleague at her workplace would drop her off in his car on most nights, and there were also days when she did not return home. When Asad confronted his wife and her parents, his wife ceased all communication and proceeded to trigger the *khulla* (Islamic divorce issued by the wife).

Subsequently, the family intervened to persuade Asad's wife to withdraw the *khulla* application, but their attempts proved unsuccessful. In January 2017 the Pakistani courts rejected the first *khulla* application and ruled in Asad's favour. He detailed the allegations his wife had made against him, which included domestic and psychological violence, which he strongly rebutted in court on the basis that his wife had spent just two weeks with him after their marriage in January 2015, during which time he asserted no bodily or mental harm took place. He presented photos of the newlywed couple leisurely sightseeing in Lahore as part of his defence in court.

Asad told me that, without the knowledge of either his or his wife's parents, she resubmitted the *khulla* application to the courts in March 2017, which was accepted two months later. His wife did not inform her family that the *khulla* had been legally accepted, however, until the mandated three-month cooling-off period had passed, during which Islamic convention dictates that a husband and wife can still resolve their marriage, particularly if the wife is pregnant. Asad explained that he believed the divorce was invalid because the Islamic process had not been applied; nor was he invited to court to defend himself. He told me that the court was obligated to write to him three times, after which it can issue a verdict without the presence of the husband. In poignant terms, Asad told me how he felt powerless when the match with his wife was first arranged, and subsequently powerless during the divorce proceedings, over which he had no control. His family had advised him that the *rishta* was still valid even while his wife pursued the divorce independently, against his wishes. In Asad's case, we gain insights into multiple state actors, including legal courts, across the transnational field that can become involved in transacting the materialisation of the migrant husband identity.

A few months later, in September 2017, Asad learnt that his now ex-wife had informed her parents that she intended to marry her colleague from the restaurant. During our interview in July 2018, Asad told me he had subsequently learnt that his ex-wife had secretly been married since November of the previous year. He explained that he had been 'a dead person walking' since the divorce, ashamed to meet his parents' gaze, and had withdrawn himself from family meals and social interactions. He told me, 'It is very shameful for me that my wife cheated on me with another man ... I feel worthless ... [W]hat was I lacking?' He detailed how he was desperate to redeem his reputation: 'No matter what it takes, I will find a way to get to England and show my wife and her new, illegitimate husband that I am still someone, still something ... that she made a mistake in divorcing me.' Asad's narrative demonstrates the challenges that migrant hopefuls may encounter even after a marriage is officiated with a British Pakistani wife.

For Armaan – whose narrative was introduced earlier in the chapter – his bride to be, Sarish, refused to marry him despite his parents agreeing to delay the marriage until after she had completed university, in line with her wishes. After graduating she refused again, as a result of which Armaan's parents' asked for his aunt's daughter's hand in marriage instead, and she agreed to marry him in 2014.

My parents were very upset about Sarish's refusal to marry me; we had waited for her since the day she was born – that's 22 years ... [W]e had told everybody that the marriage would happen ... my parents gave sweets out and did the *dhol* [drums] to announce the marriage many years ago. There was so much

shame for us ... My parents tried their best to find me another British girl but it was very hard ... [L]uckily, my other cousin agreed to marry me, which helped us save face because I would still be going to England ...

Armaan arrived in the United Kingdom in August 2016 and now has a one-year-old son with his wife.

It shattered me to pieces for a long time when Sarish refused to marry me ... I mean, for my whole life I was raised thinking and believing I was going to marry her ...; I loved her. I am now happily married with a son, but I do think about Sarish ... I see her occasionally at family gatherings. I wonder what life would have been like if we had married ...

The experiences of Khalid, Asad, and Armaan intimately demonstrate that the act of becoming British is not achieved instantaneously once a marriage has been arranged or performed but, rather, involves a series of transactions entailing lengthy, bureaucratic processes hallmarked by frequent insecurity and intrusion by state regulations, as well as by extended family and in-laws. For Khalid, the protracted visa sponsorship process was anxiety-inducing, ambiguous, and difficult to navigate. For Asad, the entire post-marriage period, when he was physically separate from his wife, was mired with tensions and dispute, eventually leading to their divorce. For Armaan, the woman he thought he would marry since his adolescence repeatedly turned down his proposal, which resulted in a new marriage match with a different British-born cousin in order to save face and facilitate his migration. These narratives demonstrate that migration is not an easy task to achieve for migrant husbands and their families. Instead, it is riddled with uncertainty, leaving men and their families desolate or frail, attempting to manage the implications that a failed migration can have for their social status, honour, and respect in their kinship network and community.

Challenges punctuated ongoing periods of waithood even after migrant husbands arrived in their new homes in Britain. For instance, Armaan told me:

When I came to England, I realised that things were very different. I started to work, but it was not easy; nothing was easy. My parents said life would be good here ... but all I am doing is working to pay off the bills ... I cannot save enough to visit my parents or see my sisters getting married. I am not sure why my parents thought it was a good idea to come to England ...; it's a hard life ...

In this excerpt, Armaan questions his parent's decision for him to migrate given the hardship he experienced, working long hours for little pay and growing bills, leaving him with financial deficits that meant he could not 'enjoy' time as a 'transnational patriarch', as he had once imagined. In what follows, I explore in greater detail a set of factors that can destabilise the migrant husband's experiences after migrating and settling in the United Kingdom.

New responsibilities

Upon migration to and settlement in the United Kingdom, many migrant husbands found that their responsibilities had multiplied in ways that they had not anticipated prior to marriage and migration. Ali told me:

My responsibilities were not only my children and my wife; it was also my sister and brother-in-law, who we lived with at the time before we got our own home, and it was also my family in Pakistan ... [I]t was also the car and the bills and council tax and insurance and the rent ... [I]t was a simple life when I was not married; now there is so much to think about ...

Suleman similarly shared the overwhelming responsibilities he came to inherit:

My wife is the only daughter. She has three brothers and is very close to her parents; naturally, I suppose, because she is the only daughter ... but I did not realise this was going to mean that I would be looking after her parents or that she was always going to live with her parents ... [H]er mother wanted me to pay towards building the conservatory to their house ...; it had only been three months that I had come to England, and on my salary I was only earning enough to send some back to my parents and give the rest to my wife ...

Previously we learnt about Ayesha, a migrant wife in Birmingham, who was trying to arrange a marriage between her brother Jameel and cousin Aminah, a university graduate currently working as a teacher. Whereas for Ayesha the benefits included having her brother in close proximity, for a number of migrant husbands the pressure of arranging further marriages for their siblings was an additional source of stress and hardship (see also Mooney 2006). For example, Altaf told me:

I was the eldest of all my brothers and sisters, and got married in 1994 and came to the UK soon after ... [A]t first I was sending money back every two to three weeks, but as my brothers and sisters got older I was expected to find suitable husbands and wives for them ... It was difficult, because I needed to respect my father-in-law too ... [T]here were some families I could not to ask for the *rishta* because my father-in-law had problems with them ... [T]here were so many sides to consider, and it was a big stress for me.

As a result, Altaf felt burdened by the expectations of those around him, which he found difficult to manage. His parents, for instance, suggested he ask for a daughter from a particular family as a marriage prospect for his sibling, but his father-in-law did not approve, putting Altaf in an awkward position. To balance the interests and priorities of different members of his family, Altaf had to manoeuvre and manage multiple social fields, which added further layers of complexity to the already amassing challenges associated with the role of a migrant husband.

Many migrant husbands were faced with mounting responsibilities in the areas of finance, family, and work upon their marriage migration, for which they lacked the required skills or experience. These responsibilities also had transnational implications for the family's symbolic capital, such as honour and social respect (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130). The addition of such responsibilities – sometimes immediately after migrating to the United Kingdom – were sources of anxiety for migrant husbands, who were adjusting to a new country, and who had migrated with their own ideas of what they hoped to achieve and acquire through migration. Examples of these ideas include sending remittances back home to their family so their families would be better off; purchasing property; starting a businesses; gaining trust, authority, and power within the community; and taking on the role of head of household. It is easy to see how these interrelated aspirations are tied to the ideal of the transnational patriarch. To add to their distress, other actors placed their own aspirations and desires onto the social complex that made up the new lifeworld of migrant husbands – ones that they were expected to share and work towards achieving jointly. For instance, Suleman's mother-in-law expected him to pay for the extension to her home. We therefore learn that migrant husbands cannot be disentangled from the social formation of their families, which they are simultaneously both a product of while contributing to their continuing evolution. In this way, then, we can begin to understand the multiplicity of ways in which the migrant husband can be transacted by various social actors, in order to achieve his personal desires and aspirations. These narratives also indicate the absence of a linear structure to the migration process. We begin to see a dissonance between the life envisaged by husbands and their families prior to marriage and the lived reality of migrant husbands struggling to make ends meet – and fulfil the multiple demands of life – in Britain.

Migrant labouring

Often within a few days of arriving in the United Kingdom the migrant husbands who took part in my research began working in jobs secured by their wives or in-laws. As noted by my interviewees, the nature of such employment was highly unregulated, insecure, and unstable, as it involved long working hours for far less than the minimum wage, reportedly as little as £1 an hour, and was devoid of contracts and – by extension – labour rights. Unsurprisingly, such dire circumstances placed migrant husbands in highly precarious social and financial circumstances. Khalid explained:

My first job was in a chip shop ...; the gaffer [manager] made me work 12 hours a day and gave me £2 an hour. In one day I would only earn £24. I guess

that was a lot compared to what I would get in Pakistan, but I heard it was very low ...; I would work seven days a week as well ... [I]f I took a break for tea or to eat he would swear at me ...; once he even slapped me because he thought I was not working hard enough ...

Nearly all the migrant husbands that I met with recounted poor working conditions (see also Datta et al. 2009: 865), low pay, and unfair treatment during their time working in restaurants or chip shops, as barbers, or butchers, or as supermarket fruit and vegetable stall assistants. Put differently, migrant husbands often became the site of transacting and securing cheap labour for their employers, in a bid to maximise profits. Aspirations to become a transnational patriarch, therefore, were forsaken, as even the bare minimum income required to sustain a basic quality of life in Britain was uncertain. As Faisal told me:

It was really hard for me to work at the supermarket ...; the fruit stalls are outside the shop and I have to help the customers if they need anything. In winter it is very hard for me to stand outside all day because of the rain and the snow; it is very cold.

Zahid had worked for his employer, a middle-aged Pakistani man, for seven years and yet still experienced hardship. He told me:

I was making pakoras [fritters] at work and someone was cleaning the cooker fan at the same time ... I think he put his weight on the cooker, and it made the pan slide and the pan fell on me ... [A]ll the hot oil fell on the floor, and I was wearing sandals because it was a hot summer's day ...I had third degree burns on my feet ...; they did an operation and took skin from the inner parts of my thighs to put on my feet. My manager visited me at home and told me not to do an insurance claim [personal injury claim] because he did not have business insurance ... [M]y wife wanted me to claim, but it is hard for me because I have to face him again. In the end he decided he would give me some sick pay, which was £100 a week ... [W]e struggled, because this was less than half of my weekly salary.

Such horrifying injuries with little or no compensation were common among my migrant husband interviewees, who were in many ways positioned outside the formal employment system rules and regulations in the United Kingdom, due to the highly irregular nature of their employment. Businesses and employers set their own rules, pay scales, and working hours, which trapped migrant husbands in liminal and precarious circumstances, often alongside unstable housing, visa, and citizenship problems, and marital disputes. For Zahid, pursuing a formal complaint about health and safety concerns in his workplace was unthinkable because it could cost him his only means of livelihood. He felt he could not subject his boss to litigation because it could damage his *izzat* and the loss of social esteem in the community.

With few or no formal means of redress available to him, Zahid preferred to resolve the matter informally and outside the remit of the state. Eventually his boss agreed to pay half his weekly wage for six months as financial compensation, which allowed him to remain afloat to pay household and family expenses. Zahid's narrative reveals another dimension that complicates the experience of migrant husbands. The different ways in which migrant husbands are susceptible to being transacted by various social actors, including employers, also becomes increasingly evident. Elderly or middle-aged male business owners frequently exploit younger and inexperienced migrants for cheap labour, because these men lack the means or knowhow to assert their rights in the workplace.

Often these harsh working conditions motivated migrant husbands to start their own businesses. Ashraf told me:

After four years working for other people, where I was basically a slave, I had saved enough money to start my own business ... [F]inally I could be the manager and not be under anyone's thumb.

Not every migrant husband, however, could save enough to start his own business, as a result of which most migrant husbands continued to work in poor conditions for long periods of time. Ali told me:

You know, there are men waiting to come to England; they are desperate to come, because they think they will have more money and have a better life ... but, honestly, you have more dignity if you stay in Pakistan ... [T]hese men do not know what life is like here ...: they think we live here like kings ... but actually we are slaves to someone or another – the people we work for, our in-laws, even our wives – and, you know what, even to this country we are just slaves, because we work in the curry houses that the *gorahs* [White people] love so much, but they hate us brown people ... [S]o many of us have been spat at in the street ... they call us 'Pakis' and tell us to go back to 'Pakiland' ... I mean, just look at the EDL (English Defence League) marches in Birmingham; they come to our city all the time, which shows they really don't like us, but are happy to eat the curries we make ...

There seems to be a dissonance between the expectation of life in Britain prior to marriage and/or migration and following the fact. Sometimes it is possible to see glimpses of creative resistance and individual agency as migrant men try to break corrosive cycles of exploitation in the workplace or the home (which is further explored in [Chapter 3](#)). At other times migrant husbands choose to revise their aspirations (see also Scheibelhofer 2018: 1003). For example, Ashraf told me that difficult working conditions motivated him to open his own business, where he could be his own boss. Such narratives demonstrate that the migration process can impact the way in which migrants see themselves and take steps to align or realign

themselves with their aspirations and goals, while at the same time maintaining a threshold of masculine identity. In Ashraf's case, not being under anyone's thumb was a crucial part of expressing his personal masculinity.

Citizenship struggles

The process of obtaining citizenship constitutes a legal and regulatory area of the state in which migrant husbands experienced unforeseen difficulties, for which they were ill prepared. For instance, Faisal told me:

When I came to England my father-in-law was bad to me ... [H]e kept my passport with him ...; he also took my wages directly from my manager, and when he would get angry, he would be violent to me ... [M]y wife and I argued a lot ...; it didn't work out [and] in the end we divorced ... [B]ut, before we divorced, a family relative convinced my father-in-law that he should make sure I get the citizenship ... [I]t took eight years to become British citizen.

Faisal's narrative is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 2](#); here, however, it is important to note that the subject of a citizenship can be a highly contentious site of struggle between the migrant husband and his wife and/or his wife's family. Migrant husbands spoke in great detail about being stuck in a power dynamic characterised by a sense of ownership exhibited by their in-laws, who had sponsored the husband's immigration, and now felt that he was in their debt. Faisal told me:

Because they were British, because they had the red passport and I didn't, and because it was down to them that I came to England – because they gave me their daughter, you see – they acted like they [had] bought me and owned me ... I was completely under their control.

Many of my interlocutors shared similar narratives to Faisal's, demonstrating the role of in-laws as well as the state in transacting migrant husbands. For instance, Ashraf told me:

My father-in-law threatened he would not make the permanent visa happen. He said he was going to get me deported ... all because I refused to stop talking to my parents because he had an argument with my dad.

The threat of deportation was a very real one for several migrant husbands, some of whom were aware of fellow migrant husbands who had been deported by their wives and in-laws due to family disputes. As a result, we begin to see that migration is not only an ongoing journey from one place to another but is a situation of precarity that can easily be disrupted by actors who assume authority over the migrant's labour, livelihood, and life choices.

In 2012 the number of years of residency required prior to obtaining citizenship was changed from two to five years under British law, which has

since impacted migrant husbands who arrived after this point in time. In other words, the British government demanded longer periods of loyalty in order to transact the British citizenship. In his experience of prolonged hardship in relation to obtaining British citizenship, Armaan told me:

I have been here for two years but it is going to take another three years before I can apply to become a British citizen ... [F]or another three years I will need to be careful, because my fate is controlled by my wife and her family, not by me ... [T]here have been times when my father-in-law has said things that I have not liked, but I can't say anything because I worry that it will cause him to make it harder for me to get the citizenship ...

Armaan's waithood for British citizenship will extend over five years or more, and fold together his past, his present, and his future, within which his identity, aspirations, and masculinity are tightly interwoven. Changing power dynamics related to Armaan's identity as a young Pakistani man, not only within his community and kin network but also the British state and British nation, are processed through an already highly racialised and unequal system of obtaining citizenship. Across the different facets of the process, Armaan, and other migrant husbands like him, occupy weak positions, especially in relation to their wives and in-laws, with whom control of the entire application resides, and therefore are unable to gain power over the multiple transactional processes at play. The outcome of this wait will determine whether, and how, he can become a transnational patriarch. This tells us that migration, replete with challenges and consequences, constitutes the vehicle through which migrant husbands' masculinity is constructed.

Armaan's narrative shows how migrant husbands often modify their behaviour and speech in order to overcome the waithood period, and achieve aspirations of becoming British. Ikram, a migrant husband who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2004, experienced a volatile relationship with his wife, who was verbally and physically abusive towards him. After an incident that left Ikram hospitalised with a stab wound (which is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 2](#) of the book) Ikram's sister, who had arrived in the United Kingdom as a migrant wife some 15 years previously, announced that this was the final straw and that the marriage was over.

When I regained consciousness the police came and took a statement from me. I told them what had happened ...; after this the police helped me get my passport quicker ... I learnt that my citizenship had been processed, but my wife and her family did not tell me ...

Ikram's case is testament that the starts and stops, blockages, and diversions that migration can entail can have severe consequences, and can even place the migrant husband's life at risk. Not all migrant husbands were

successful, however, after experiencing the vulnerabilities associated with being a migrant husband. Farhan, a 35-year-old IT technician, told me:

My cousin from Pakistan was married here to one of my other cousins. He was treated really badly; they were beating him and everything ... [T]hey told everyone he was mentally unwell and not fit for their daughter, and took him back to Pakistan to his parents, and just left him there.

Farhan's cousin was taken back to his parents in Pakistan by his in-laws and did not gain British citizenship. Farhan told me that his cousin was able to remarry in Pakistan, however, and is now the father of twin boys. In the case of Farhan's cousin, then, the aspirations to become British ended entirely, with his in-laws exercising their power as British citizens to 'return' their son-in-law as though he was a purchased product they were no longer happy with. However, his ability to remarry a Pakistani national and have children punctured the narrative in the community that Farhan's in-laws had constructed, as it was a testament to his ability to sustain a marriage and start a family, despite failing as a 'transnational patriarch'. Together, these narratives demonstrate the rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) nature of migration journeys, as they spread and grow in all directions, like the roots of a tree.

Conclusion

In this [first chapter](#) of the book I traced the experiences of migrant husbands in the preliminary stages of their marriage migration journeys, as they struggled to balance sometimes lifelong yearnings to live and work in Britain with the constraints of finding a suitable British spouse. Often the migration journey begins long before the moment of departure itself, which speaks directly to scholars who have similarly argued that migration is an ongoing process (McCormack and Schwanen 2011; Collins 2018). The chapter also demonstrates that individual aspirations for migration are often entangled with the desires and needs of close kin and community, rendering migration a collective undertaking (Carling and Schewel 2018: 958; see also Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010: 251). For many migrant husbands, aspirations to migrate are planted early by their families, forging dreams of eventually settling abroad with opportunities unavailable in their hometowns or villages. Such aspirations took on an embodied form, as these men's physical appearances, body weight, height, haircut, and clothing were carefully planned to secure a *rishta* that will take them to Britain. This styling of the migrant-husband-to-be can be interpreted as sub-transactions mimicking features perceived to represent 'whiteness', and what it means to fit into

Britain, which are deeply rooted in colonial histories and a global culture of visibility that projects Western, White men as personifying desirability. Social media has emerged over the last 20 years or so as an invaluable tool to 'market' the suitability of potential migrant husbands to the families of British Pakistani women, making them appear modern, well-read, and attractive matches for British daughters in Birmingham and elsewhere. In tracing the making of the migrant husband since childhood, we gain crucial insights into the beginnings of the migration process as involving transactions that result in the summation of the migrant husband. It also demonstrates the sheer collective investment made on behalf of migrant husbands by families to achieve the desired outcome of marriage migration, and the sacrifices, both symbolic and financial, that this entails.

The chapter also explored how migrant husbands aspired towards an ideal masculine form that entailed being a double breadwinner for their families in the United Kingdom and in Pakistan. I term this ideal masculine form the 'transnational patriarch', comprised of three interrelated elements: the business man, the family man, and the respected man (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130). A significant finding that emerges from this chapter is the way in which the special imagining of the homeland itself has 'migrated', or been transported, due to the pioneer generations of migrants, who returned and/or remitted funds to build the impressive mansions that now dominate the skyline of local towns and cities in Pakistan. These serve as symbolic and physical reminders of the potential status, honour, and respect a man can achieve by becoming a successful migrant husband in Britain. In other words, migration carried symbolic capital within the homeland, and the meaning attributed to this shaped present and future aspirations, showing that migration, masculinity, and marriage are intricately connected.

The narratives of the migrant husbands described throughout this chapter provide a glimpse of the potential dissonance between the aspirations of migrant husbands prior to marriage migration and their lived realities after migration. The path to 'becoming British', variously described through the personal narratives of my interviewees, demonstrates a troubling period of wait-hood following the marriage ceremony but before the migration takes place, due mainly to lengthy immigration rules and regulations, which showcases the way in which migrant husbands can be transacted both by in-laws and by the state. In turn, this was followed by often unstable and insecure conditions upon settlement in the United Kingdom, made more burdensome with new responsibilities, hazardous or unfair conditions in the workplace, and an arduous bureaucracy that complicated the hope of British citizenship. Combined, these factors obfuscated and blurred the original aspirations migrant husbands held prior to marriage migration.

Although the presentation of the findings perhaps indicates temporal linearity as ‘before, during, and after’ marriage migration, it is important to recognise that the stages of migration cannot be neatly divided into insular categories. Considering the phases of migration through a non-linear perspective makes it possible to see how migration is shaped by the social complex in which the multiple frames of the migrant husband, as an autonomous agent, as proxy, as labourer, as father and son, are produced and reproduced over time and space.

Emerging through this chapter is a recognition of the sharp changes that aspirations undergo within both the social imaginaries and lived social realities of migrant husbands. Migration through time, place, and space influences not only a migration of social identity but also the socially embodied experience of migrant husbands, which is very rarely documented. In the [next chapter](#) I study the implications of waithood, insecurity, and instability, especially in and through the state and citizenship, for migrant husbands’ masculinity. I demonstrate how wives and in-laws in particular become agents of the state, (re-)enacting colonial state violence in and through immigration and citizenship rules.

Note

- 1 It is not yet known whether these figures continued during the Covid-19 pandemic years, or whether they were brought to a temporary halt due to the closure of borders.

Liminal masculinity: waithood, precarity, and vulnerable migrant husbands

Introduction

Munir was born in a village near Jhelum in Pakistan and migrated to Birmingham in 2010 after marrying his cousin Aisha, his maternal first cousin. When he arrived in Birmingham his father-in-law secured him a job at a local supermarket, stocking shelves and assisting customers with carrying their groceries to their vehicles. His father-in-law promptly collected Munir's weekly salary from his boss, around £150 in total, leaving him with little or no access to finances save for the £20 Munir's father-in-law gave him from his pay packet. Munir's father-in-law also confiscated his passport and visa documents. During one of our conversations he told me:

A few weeks after starting my job I thought I would ask my father-in-law for some of my wage so that I could send it to my mother back home, who was unwell. He got really angry and hit me in the car. I remember I felt my head bang against the car seat window, and everything went black. 'You don't send any money back home; I send the money. Who do you think you are? You've been here a month and you want to act big and send money back home, do you?' He told me all these things that hurt my feelings. I thought he cared for me because he was my mum's brother. My mum even told me before I came to England that I would be fine, because her brother would take care of me. He was really controlling and bad to me.

Within a month of arriving in the United Kingdom, Munir's father-in-law had assumed control over Munir's freedom of movement and legal documents, and removed any possibility of independently sending remittances to his family in Pakistan. Munir found himself in a rigid power dynamic after his marriage migration that trapped him in an inferior status against his father-in-law, who quickly asserted control over Munir's life decisions, both major and daily ones. Under the shadow of his uncle, who was now his father-in-law, his ability to establish himself as a transnational patriarch was made more difficult. Rather, it was the father-in-law's

transnational patriarch identity that was reinforced in and through his control of Munir's newfound status as a new migrant and wage earner, in the shared household.

Munir went on:

Once I remember he asked for water, and when I brought the glass to him it was wet because I had rinsed it before filling it with water. He threw the water in my face and the glass on the floor in front of my other uncles. One of my uncles said: 'What are you doing? Don't be so harsh; it's just a little wet', but my father-in-law told him: 'He needs to know how to serve me properly; he's ungrateful for what I've done for him.'

Serving his father-in-law at dinnertime became a regular chore for Munir, which often led to outbursts of verbal and physical abuse if certain standards were not met. Such abuse worsened Munir's mental health and well-being, leaving him feeling isolated and unable to cope with mounting pressures in an alien environment. It soon became clear to him that his lived experience of marriage migration differed greatly from the aspirations and dreams he had held prior to leaving Pakistan. He had not expected to be subjected to his father-in-law's dominance and violence, feeling vulnerable and inferior, and having no control over his finances or legal documents. He told me he felt stuck when he first arrived, questioning whether marriage migration was worth the heavy sacrifices he had had no choice but to make in exchange for a new life in Birmingham.

The migration and masculinity scholarship: a critical response

The conventional push/pull model of migration assumes (Collins 2018: 965) that, once migrants arrive at their country of destination, they no longer struggle or experience hardships, as these experiences were 'left behind' in their countries of origin. Eurocentric and Enlightenment-era-inspired views can often trap narratives of migration within a binary framework, leaving the 'bad' behind and embracing the good 'ahead' (El-Tayeb 2011). Within this approach, the West is often fashioned as a place where freedom and liberal principles are achieved, pitted against the 'East', which is cast as a primitive and underdeveloped place (Said 1990). This false binary mutes the diverse range of experiences migrants can have upon arrival and settlement, as they can be lost, ignored, or misunderstood in and among integration narratives, or those of successful migrant stories. In an increasingly precarious and vulnerable world for migrants who are opting to embark on dangerous journeys across the ocean in order to flee oppressive conditions in their home countries, the case study of migrant husbands diversifies the documentation of migrant experiences.

The growing body of literature on men and masculinity studies has helped to keep the door open for the documentation of migrant men's experiences in a range of social and cultural settings around the world. This includes the ways in which migrant men inscribe into their new environments past memories of their personhood, status, and identity to carve their place within the changed social dynamics of the migrant community, within which they do not feel as though they belong (Jansen 2008). For example, in his ethnographic work Jansen traces how Somali Muslim migrant men experienced low self-esteem when they felt their role as breadwinners and providers for their families was overshadowed by the state's provision of welfare benefits (Jansen 2008; see also Este and Tachble 2009). In Gallo's (2006) ethnography, south Indian men who migrated after marriage to Italy felt secondary to their wives as they acquired spousal citizenship status and employment rights. They felt they were seen as only hard-working, reliable men due to the precedent their wives had set prior to their own migration (Gallo 2006).

These rich ethnographies demonstrate that men also undergo continual processes of renegotiation through the immigration and settlement process, exposing them to a range of vulnerabilities. Some are like the vulnerabilities experienced by women, and some may be specific to men precisely because of their gender, and gender-related roles (Espiritu 1997: 75; Luu 1989: 68). They also speak to the broader study of masculinity as a field of sociology, within which scholars have developed significant theories, including 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 2005), which proposes a hierarchy among multiple forms of masculinity, with a hegemonic version at its peak that subordinates both women and marginalised men (Connell 2013: 303). Interviews with migrant men such as Munir demonstrate that their dreams and aspirations evolve through personal and public renegotiation due to power figures, such as fathers-in-law, who ascribe to more hegemonic forms of masculinity within the diverse spectrum of masculine identities (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008).

One of the most prominent developments in the field has been proposed by Marcia Inhorn (2012; Inhorn et al. 2009; Inhorn and Naguib 2018), who has recognised the 'emergence' of masculinities. Inhorn's concept of 'emerging masculinities' attempts to identify and capture the formation of different kinds of masculinity in their interaction with new forms of technology within the Arab world (Inhorn 2018). The concept speaks to processes of social change as they relate to expressions of masculinity, as men navigate and adapt to their social worlds across time and life stages, and respond to shifts in evolving social histories (Inhorn 2013: 60). Although concepts such as 'emergence' and 'multiplicity' retain their usefulness as tools of analysis in the field, it is important to note that the 'processes' that

occur during and while ‘emergence’ or ‘multiplicity’ are described are little accounted for. Moreover, the ‘emergence’ of masculinity carries overtones of a new masculinity breaking through (and rightly so for some ethnographic cases), including the case of migrant husbands in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community. My own ethnographic work with migrant husbands in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community points towards a unique set of social circumstances that gives rise to an ‘in-between’ masculinity, which speaks to multiplicity and hybridity, while also documenting the drivers and processes behind what I call ‘liminal masculinity’.

The personal narratives of migrant husbands that I document in this book demonstrate a process of *waithood* (see also Singerman 2007; Honwana 2012) that takes place after the marriage ceremony, but before the act of physical migration to their new adopted country to join the wife. In the context of Britain, this period of *waithood* is caused mainly by tightened immigration rules, which require a higher threshold of an annual salary of £18,500 to sponsor a spouse from another country (increased to £29,000 in 2024), and for migrant spouses to pass English tests, for which a certificate is presented as part of the application to the UK Home Office. Such bureaucratic obstacles, as well as points of transacting visas and migratory routes, have been designed to deter disadvantaged and non-English-speaking migrants as they aspire to migration rights through marriage. From the outset, British state policies have aspired to forge a migrant middle class, one that is well educated, capable of skilled labour, and thus more likely to integrate into British society.¹ These policies contribute significantly to the onset of protracted *waithood* periods after marriage, delaying not just migration but, in many cases, the family reunion of migrant husbands and their wives and children. For the post-migration stage, the Home Office has imposed policies such as the ten-year rule to acquire settlement status (called indefinite leave to remain, or ILR, in the United Kingdom), with evidence being provided to the Home Office after two years, five years, and ten years of marriage, as well as a citizenship test at the ten-year mark to demonstrate that the migrant spouse has fully assimilated into British society. The citizenship test, which all migrants regardless of their migration route to Britain are required to take, has been widely criticized, as it is composed of questions that even ordinary British citizens do not know the answers to. The *waithood* period to attain British citizenship therefore extends over a decade, which gives rise to heightened vulnerability and precarity for the migrant husband. There exist, then, heavy and burdensome transactional levies one must exchange with the state in order to gain access to marriage migration and settlement.

Waithood impacts migrant husbands beyond the process of acquiring British citizenship, however, and extends to disempowering subjectivity and

shaping masculinity in new and unpredictable ways. It is precisely this (re) shaping of masculinity that the current chapter aims to map, with the [next chapter](#) tracing the ways in which migrant husbands navigate their newly shaped masculinities. In this chapter I focus more closely on migrant husband experiences upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, and consider how, during this period, the experience of being a migrant husband unfolds. In doing so, I hope first to provide deeper insight into the dissonance experienced by Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant husbands before and after their marriage migration journeys. Second, I aim to explore the impact of marriage experiences in relation to the social and cultural norms associated with gender and marriage within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community. Finally, by bracketing this particular social time (upon marriage migration) and social space (post-migration settlement in the United Kingdom), I aim to trace the social dynamics and mechanisms at play that shape the marriage–masculinity–migration nexus for migrant husbands.

This chapter is comprised of three sections: ‘Migrant husbands and wait-hood’, ‘Domestic violence’, and ‘Reworking of gender power’. The first section considers the precarious lives that migrant husband can often lead upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, which is largely informed by their wait-hood, and often results in their emasculation. Wait-hood is a concept I borrow from Diane Singerman (2007), who first used the term (see Honwana 2012: 3), which has since been developed by social scientists to study experiences of youth in different contexts across the world as they make the transition into adulthood (Dhillon, Dyer, and Yousef 2009; Hage 2009; Honwana 2012, 2013; McEvoy-Levy 2014; Inhorn 2018; Janeja and Bandak 2018). Singerman (2007) employs the term to describe the experience of ‘stuck’ youth in the Middle East, who, due to socio-political-economic circumstances, experience prolonged wait-hood before marriage, perceived as a significant threshold into adult life. Although there have been studies exploring the experiences of waiting in camps and detention centres as refugees and asylum seekers (Agier, Nice, and Wacquant 2002; Whyte 2011; Turner 2012; Andersson 2014; Rotter 2016), these have carried the assumption that the temporal act of waiting is somehow finite. It is being increasingly recognised, however, that prolonged wait-hood is becoming a permanent state that is gradually replacing conventional markers of adulthood (Honwana 2012). I therefore want to push the concept of wait-hood further by applying it in the context of Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant husbands in Britain, and in this chapter do so by examining the impact of wait-hood arising as a result of (a) strict immigration rules and regulations, (b) in-laws practising state-like and subordinating power, and (c) the roots of such power in legacies of racism and colonialism (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121; Kalra 2009: 118) perpetuated in and through both

the state (see also Bi 2023) and extended family, such as in-laws. During waitthood, then, I show that migrant husbands become increasingly transacted upon by both the in-laws and the state.

In the second section of the chapter I consider the subordinate position of migrant husbands in the marriage household (see also Charsley 2005) and demonstrate how this can at times lead to forms of domestic violence against the migrant husband, rendering him silent and invisible in diverse social and political fields. I devise a model to frame the experiences of migrant husbands by drawing on theories of domestic violence from Evan Stark (2007, 2010), Nughmana Mirza (2017), and Sylvia Walby and Judith Towers (2018). I interweave migrant husbands' life history narratives within the text to demonstrate the complexities and nuances of the abuse they can experience, and thereby the dynamics of the power complexes they are situated in and try to navigate in different ways. The final section considers the changing nature of gender and family dynamics, bringing into question our understandings of honour, patriarchy, and the state. More broadly, this chapter destabilises our current understandings of gender dynamics within Muslim communities and, more specifically, the British Pakistani community, as it demonstrates that men can also be victims of oppression and abuse. Drawing on Turner's work on liminality, the crux of my argument in this chapter is that, due to experiences of precarity and waitthood, migrant husbands experience a liminal masculinity that exposes them to being transacted. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on how the insights gained through the case of British Pakistani migrants can apply to other transnational marriage migration journeys elsewhere, in Europe or North America.

The difference in experiences of migrant husbands before marriage and migration and after marriage and/or migration speaks to Turner's idea of liminality (1967), as the migration process bracketed here relates to a transitory period. During this transitory period between the two social positions, 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1967) structures, the individual's social status and role in society are socially and structurally ambiguous. In a similar vein, migrant husbands are 'betwixt and between' from the outset of transnational marriage, which suspends them from their identity as Pakistani citizens through the migration process, during which they are also suspended between two countries (Pakistan and the United Kingdom). During the settlement period migrant husbands continue to experience 'in-betweenness' through their unresolved citizenship status and frequently violent and fraught marital and family dynamics, both at home and across borders, all of which, I argue, lead to an 'in-between' or – better put – liminal masculinity. Although their 'betwixtness' and 'in-betweenness' are translated in a number of ways, the crux of their experience lies between their status as

a migrant husband, a weak *ghar dhamad/ghar jawai*² (house husband) (see Chopra 2013; Charsley 2005), and the idealised prototype of the transnational patriarch. Of course, multiple and complex factors determine the course of events, which result in the progression of liminal masculinity. For instance, some migrant husbands – such as Asad, introduced later in the chapter – experienced divorce prior to migrating to the United Kingdom, which holds a different set of consequences for the migrant husband. It is for this reason, I believe, that the concept of liminal masculinity captures the process that masculine identity undergoes as a result of the migration and settlement process.

The case study of Muslim migrant husbands in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities not only demonstrates that masculinity is more complex than simply a hegemonic masculine ideal that is aspired to, and therefore supports the notions of multiple and complex masculinities (see also Connell 2005), but also shows that there are new patterns of masculinity that might be emerging in transnational spaces (see also Connell 1987). This ethnography of migrant husbands demonstrates that, with migration and social experiences such as marriage, masculinity becomes more fluid and mobile. It is precisely this continued mobility through space, place, social circumstances, and embodied experience – which can often be characterised as precarious and give rise to *waithood*, during which migrant husbands can experience powerlessness – that can be seen to take on a permanent or protracted form. These reflections further support the utility of liminal masculinity as a contribution to the emergent field of masculinity studies. A key limitation of liminality theory, however, is that it characterises a ‘transitionary state’ and does not specifically apply to the individual person within the time, space, and place in which they are situated. I attempt to remedy and rectify this through modifying the concept to expand its productive use over the course of this book. Furthermore, key questions to consider are these: when and/or where does liminal masculinity stop and/or start and/or interrupt and/or return for migrant husbands? Subsequent chapters address these questions and weaknesses in liminality theory in order to better explain the liminal experience of migrant husbands.

Migrant husbands and *waithood*

Globally, scholars have discussed the irregular and unstable nature of employment and labour rights (Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Standing 2010), which many view as a major factor in inspiring the surge of uprisings in 2011 that spread from Tunisia to Yemen as the so-called Arab Spring (Singer 2007; Inhorn 2018; Khosravi 2017). Irregularity and instability

of employment are thought to be key features of a significant demographic shift in marital norms, to which Singerman's (2007) concept of *waithood* is central. She argues that rising unemployment has led to precarious financial conditions, making it difficult for young people to acquire socially acceptable forms of bride wealth required for marriage (2007), causing young people to marry later in life (see also Sommers 2012). Although this earlier use of the term carries connotations of hope and perseverance, which may eventually lead to overcoming the period of *waithood* and triumphing (Hage 2009), Honwana (2012, 2013) has recognised that *waithood* is becoming increasingly permanent in nature, replacing conventional forms of adulthood (2012: 6). In the migration literature, scholars have explored the impacts of waiting in liminal spaces such as detention centres and refugee camps (Agier, Nice, and Wacquant 2002; Whyte 2011; Turner 2012; Andersson 2014; Rotter 2016). A flourishing body of work demonstrates the tension between different forms of waiting, which is often imposed by states to slow down movement towards Europe and/or keep out refugees and migrants by making them linger and await decisions (Lucht 2012; Andersson 2014; Janeja and Bandak 2018), often in inhumane and unlawful transitional spaces. As a result of these structurally and institutionally imposed forms of waiting, displaced people can experience precarious conditions (Bayart 2007; Paret and Gleeson 2016: 281). *Waithood* and precarity in migration can be seen to be interconnected, widening the spaces of disempowerment and thereby increasing the likelihood of being the site of transaction(s).

Similar to the concept of *waithood*, precariousness (or precarity) has also been afforded exploration within the social sciences in recent years. The concept can be traced back to Pierre Bourdieu's study of Algeria, in which he employs it to differentiate casual workers from permanent workers (Waite 2009: 414), and has since been prevalently used to focus on employment and the labour market, linking precarity to economic insecurity. Standing (2010) argues that the 'precariat' is a new global class in the making, which is comprised of workers who lack basic securities such as social mobility employment, union representation, and income security (see also Paret and Gleeson 2016: 279). Khosravi (2017) develops the notion further through his examination of the experiences of Iranians in a politically charged climate both domestically within Iran, and in relation to foreign relations with international actors such as the United States, which created conditions of instability and insecurity, resulting in millions of Iranians leading precarious lives.

The notion of precarity is especially relevant to the field of migration studies, as migrant populations frequently experience vulnerability within and across borders due to legal regimes around illegality and deportability (De Genova 2010; Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013). Illegal or undocumented

migration often goes hand in hand with precarious employment, which can push workers into grey or shadow areas of the economy, where wages are low and workplace protections are limited or non-existent (Paret 2014, 2015). Immigration controls as a result produce precarious migrants and particular types of labour (Anderson 2010), which can be multiplied and multifaceted if considered through intersectional identity markers (see also Nielson and Rossiter 2008). Since immigration controls impact different migrant populations in different ways, applying the concept of precarity more widely could generate a fruitful analysis of migrant experiences transnationally. As previously mentioned, transnational marriage migration subjects migrant husbands to immigration control and surveillance, which can heighten their precariousness both inside and outside the home. The exacerbation of informal immigration control through kinship networks and the domestic household and its impact on precarity has not previously been studied, however. Precarity in and through the state, and capitalist off-sets such as the labour market, constitutes spaces within which experiences are currently explored. The rise of precarity through kin relations that can facilitate migration and labour, and exploit the migrant in exchange for his wages, is a particular nuance that this chapter explores in depth.

There is a vast literature on transnational marriages among British south Asians (Werbner 1990; Shaw 2000, 2006; Charsley 2005; Qureshi 2013). Espiritu (1997: 8) points out that, through the immigration and settlement process, patriarchal relations undergo continual renegotiation as women and men build their lives in a new country. As a result, both women's and men's sense of independence and well-being is under considerable pressure from shifting gender roles, leading to a higher incidence of abuse (Espiritu 1997: 75; Luu 1989: 68), and diverse forms of social precarity. Although female spouses are generally thought to be better prepared for married life due to the traditional virilocal practice of marriage common to south Asian communities (Charsley 2005), it is thought that male spouses may experience greater difficulty in adjusting to married life, as the move to their wives' and in-laws' house in a transnational marriage renders them weaker (Charsley 2005, 2012). Within south Asian communities, men who migrate to their wives' or her parents' household have been described as *ghar dhamads*.³ Social scientists have noted that the husband in this marital set-up becomes reduced in his capacity to retain control over his wife (Jeffery, Jeffery, and Lyon 1989: 37), which can be a source of unhappiness (Charsley 2005). In parts of the Middle East, such as Iran, the term for a man seen to be under the control of his wife is referred to as *zanzalil*, a social warranty for teasing and humiliation by fellow men (Khosravi 2017, 41). The unhappiness, weaker position, and possible humiliation may constitute precarious conditions for male migrant spouses. Nevertheless, when

combined with immigration controls, which, as previously mentioned, can create protracted waitness(s), not only does precarity intersect with migration but precarity and waitness are both useful concepts for examining the experiences of male migrant spouses and the ways in which their masculinity is impacted by the state.

An underlying assumption behind the concept of waitness in the context of studies recounted earlier is its limited use to describe the period prior to marriage. Waitness can also occur after marriage is officiated, however, such as in the waitness phase for bearing children when experiencing fertility issues (Inhorn et al. 2009). Migrant husband narratives provide glimpses of waitness experienced at different stages of the marriage and migration process. For instance, after marriage, many migrant husbands entered a waitness period during which their immigration documents were prepared by their wives and in-laws, a process that could last from six months to five or more years. Hussain, a 28-year-old college-educated migrant husband from Azad Kashmir, told me:

Getting married to someone who is British did not make me British; there was so much work involved after that. I mean, it was hard to get married, it took a long time to convince the family [of the bride], and we waited three years for them to say yes. But even after marriage there was more waiting, because of the paperwork ... [T]here were tuberculosis tests and English tests and telephone records ...; providing our letters to show we were communicating, and also our bank statements to show she was sending me money here in Pakistan ... It was all very stressful.

During this time of post-marriage waitness Hussain told me that his life became insecure and he lost hope. He told me:

I did not know whether to work in Pakistan or wait on my wife to send me money. I did not know whether to continue studying either, because, if the visa was issued at any time, I would have to leave and go to the UK, and then the tuition fees for university would be a waste of money ... If there was something wrong in the paperwork it would cause arguments between me and my father-in-law or my wife, and then my parents would worry ... I just started to lose all hope ...

Poignantly, we can begin to identify the simultaneous actions of both the state and the in-laws in constructing Hussain's experience of waitness. Documentation of the marriage and its ongoing nature was essential to prove to the Home Office that the marriage was genuine. The documentation, which included wedding photographs, the *nikaah* certificate, his wife's plane tickets for the arrival in Pakistan for the wedding, her wage slips – to name a few examples – formed the transactional material upon which the success of his visa application rested. Arguments between the families often interrupted the visa application process, however. Going forward, it

is important to recognise how the relationship between the state and the British Pakistani in-laws was a significant driver shaping the migrant husband's experience.

For Asad, who married his cousin's daughter in 2015, this insecure wait-hood period after his marriage was incredibly distressing. A year after the marriage tensions were widespread with his wife, who was at the time working as a waitress at a Pakistani restaurant in Birmingham. The distance between the couple grew as arguments and misunderstandings unfolded, eventually leading to his wife submitting a *khulla*, and subsequently entering into marriage with someone who she had met at her place of work. This was a source of great emotional turmoil and distress for Asad (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127), as well as shame for both him and his family in the wider community. Not only had Asad's aspirations to *become* British been ruined but he had lost his masculinity and social status in the process. He told me that he often heard taunts such as 'You couldn't handle a little girl; what kind of man are you?', which also point to the patriarchal discourse that informs the interactions and views among aspiring migrants. For Asad, the wait-hood period felt as if it was completely out of his control. He was unable to communicate clearly with his wife due to the distance, as communication via mobile phone and text messages were largely a hindrance, resulting in a deteriorating rift between the newlyweds. Nonetheless, technology provided Asad a window of opportunity to express his views as much as possible, providing him with an agency that was not afforded by the family or the state. Asad told me he felt he was at the mercy of his wife and in-laws, who set out to paint him in a negative light prior to his application being submitted to the Home Office. In this way, then, Asad's wife and in-laws were gate-keepers to the state, and therefore the migration mobility that can be offered in and through state institutions.

In another instance, the post-marriage wait-hood went on for eight years after the marriage due to the difficulty in meeting the minimum annual income threshold required for immigration. Sufyan, who I interviewed via Skype, told me:

I got married in 2010 but I am still here in Pakistan eight years later. My wife and two children are in the UK; they come and visit me, but then they have to go back, because the children have started school. But in the first few years, when they did not attend school, they lived here in Pakistan for three years ... [I]t's hard for me, because I cannot see my children and they can always forget me as their father because of the distance ... I never thought that I would be a father like this, with my children so far away and I am stuck here ... [S]ometimes I feel useless because I cannot provide them how a father should provide for them ... I try my best to keep positive but this really might be the way things are for a very, very long time ...

In Sufyan's case, the UK immigration rules and regulations became so burdensome that he believed they constituted an infringement on his right to family life under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act. He refrained from lodging a challenge, however, due to his limited financial means. He also considered the likelihood of the Home Office ultimately rejecting his application.

There is no point in submitting the case to say that it's my human right to live with my family; they will just reject it, because they look at the earnings. We are not going to waste almost £3,000 to file the case for my visa to not ever get that money back ... I would rather we use it on the children.

The role of the state in both facilitating and disrupting the lives of migrant men can be significant. Meeting the required income threshold can be seen as a methodology of the state to transact desired migrants, and, in the case of some migrant husbands, became a considerable barrier to submitting their visa application. In Sufyan's case this was a significant barrier, as his wife had never been formally employed and, therefore, could not satisfy the income threshold. Such policies can be seen as part of a wider strategy by successive UK governments to prevent the migration of persons who they deem likely to rely on the resources of the welfare state. It also demonstrates state power to a greater degree, as it is only current citizens who are provided the opportunity to demonstrate their earning capacity, while incoming spouses are not scrutinised on this criterion. For example, Sufyan was employed full-time as a cashier at a petrol station in the town near his village, which could have demonstrated his ability to earn a sufficient income and therefore not rely on the welfare state. There is currently no such provision to measure spousal income in the sending country, as spouses are able to engage in employment, in a balanced way. The onus – and thus the privilege – of citizenship, and therefore employability and earning capacity, is, from the outset, on the British citizen sponsoring their spouse. The power dynamics between the migrant husband and his wife and in-laws are therefore constructed in and through immigration rules and regulations of the host country, echoing scholars who have argued that negotiations of identities are provisional and contextual (Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 119), and constituted through social relations of power and inequality (Kalra 2009: 117–118; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121). In this way, the British state maintains transactional control of migrants coming into the country, who are permitted entry upon economic conditions being satisfied, which include not relying on the state for welfare and their spouses being able to accommodate them economically, despite the grounds of their application pertaining to family reunification.

Sufyan's account also highlights the extent to which being unable to perform his duties as a husband and a father were impacted by state policies, which led to Sufyan feeling emasculated.

Hopefully, the children will grow up and want to know me and want to contact me. I worry a lot because they are far away and I'm not with them, that they will not care about me or they might think I don't care about them ... [Y]ou know, children are young, they don't see the details straight away; they just know that their dad is not with them, and that really bothers me. It's hard, because my wife is raising the children by herself and I cannot be there for her as a husband ...

In some cases, when migrant husbands have already endured periods of waithood before migrating to the United Kingdom, they can find they face further uncertainty after arriving. Armaan explained:

When I arrived in England, I finally thought: 'This is it; I'm here now, I can start a family, work and live life' – you know, do all the things I dreamed about ... But I did not know there would be more difficulties and pains when coming here ... [M]y whole life revolved around my father-in-law's saying and doing. He would say 'Sir' and I would sit; he would say 'Stand' and I would have to stand ... [U]ntil I get my citizenship, in three years' time, my life will be controlled, and it will probably be controlled even after ... because, when I get citizenship, they [in-laws] will say 'We got you the citizenship; you do as we say', or threaten to deport me ...

The power of the state over citizenship rights, surveillance, and monitoring is frequently mimicked and embodied by the migrant husbands' wives and in-laws, who often threaten them with revoking their sponsorship, which can lead to deportation. Migrant husbands such as Armaan told me they feared the sheer shame they and their families would face if they were to be deported. Apparatus such as deportation is employed as a form of leverage that performs as a constant threat, sometimes overtly and other times covertly, positioning these men as inferior and allowing for the exercise of control and subjugation. Collectively, these narratives indicate that, contrary to the initial concept of waithood (Singerman 2007; Dhillon and Yousef 2009; see also Hage 2009) – that waithood is experienced prior to marriage – waithoods (in multiple forms) can in fact occur at different stages of both the marriage and migration processes. In addition, the narratives demonstrate that waithood for the migrant husband is like the overflowing river that breaks its banks, changing boundaries, structures, and perceptions of space, place, and time between water and earth – the migrant husband and his social field. Multiple and intersecting waithoods, at different stages of the marriage and migration processes, can expose migrant husbands to increased vulnerability and precarity, involving processes of emasculation and subjugation.

Powerlessness and inferiority

Waiting, as Bourdieu (2000: 228) has put it, is a way of experiencing the effects of power, generating a feeling of powerlessness and vulnerability among the less powerful groups in society (Auyero 2012; Crapanzano 1985: 45) by actors such as the state (see also Agier, Nice, and Wacquant 2002; Bayat 2007; Whyte 2011; Lucht 2012; Andersson 2014; Rotter 2016; Janeja and Bandak 2018). To be kept waiting is to be the subject of an assertion that one's own time, and therefore one's own social worth, is less valuable than the time and worth of the actor imposing the wait (Schwartz 1974: 856). For migrant husbands, the wait(s) they are subjected to is twofold: waiting imposed by the wife and/or in-laws; and waiting imposed by the state, through immigration laws. Both sources of waiting, when combined, cause an exacerbated sense of powerlessness, contributing to their leading precarious lives (Allison 2013; Khosravi 2017) and increasing their susceptibility to being transacted upon. Wait(s), imbued with implications of power, indicates a broader geopolitical power dynamic, as it is Pakistani and Kashmiri nationals that are subject to such state power. The politics of Pakistani and Kashmiri migration to Britain can be viewed through this lens as an extension of the historical colonial legacy. Do we require the acquisition and conquering of lands in order for colonial power to be exerted? My ethnography demonstrates that colonial power continues through the control of bodies through migration and freedom to move freely, which is not afforded to Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant husbands. Interestingly, the involvement of in-laws in preventing the free movement of migrant husbands, who are often their kinsmen, demonstrates something much more sinister about colonial power and legacy: that it can, in fact, be practised by the very people it had once oppressed, as their aspirations to migrate and move to the United Kingdom are intertwined with aspiring to embody colonial power.

We can view this embodied relationship between in-laws and the state in Yasin's narrative. For Yasin, a 32-year-old migrant husband from Azad Kashmir, the state became a great source of emotional distress.

They [UK Home Office] want her [wife] to earn more than £18,000 a year; she only has a college education, and they tell me there are no jobs available in Birmingham, where they [in-laws and wife] live ... [T]hey [in-laws and wife] are trying to show [on the books] she has the income, but it is taking time ... [O]ne employer said he will put her on the books. Then, after six months, he did not give the pay slips [evidence of monthly wage], and so we could not send the visa application ... [N]ow we are waiting again for her to find a way to show the income.

He further explained:

It makes me feel they [government] put all these things in the way to stop us from coming to England ... I just want to live a happily married life, and they don't even let me do that ... [I]t has happened to so many people, who are waiting because the government does not let us come ... I really worry: do I have to live married life like this forever ...? I can't even sleep at night.

Sufyan, who has been waiting eight years, told me he had lost all hope.

There is nothing I can do. My father-in-law is useless; he does not get along with my dad at all, and he even asked his daughter to divorce me, but she refused ... [H]e is making sure I never get to the UK because of his enemy relationship with my dad. I have lost all hope, because my father-in-law is not doing anything, and, alone, Sofia cannot prepare the paperwork ... [S]he does not have a college education – she only went to school – and even if she does work there is nobody to look after the children ...

Sufyan's powerlessness was exacerbated both by the state and his father-in-law, who, in Sufyan's view was pursuing revenge from Sufyan's father by preventing his son's migration to the United Kingdom. Sufyan told me that he is 'depressed' as a result of the 'pressures from all sides' he has been experiencing for many years. He particularly stressed that 'nobody cared about his children growing up in the absence of a father', neither his father-in-law nor the state.

Amir, who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2014, told me how he felt powerless as a result of having no control over his life.

Everything is always decided; I do not have a say in anything. From little things like getting curtains or blinds to big things like living across the street to my in-laws, where I get to work, when I can go to Pakistan to see my family, how much money I can send to my family each month, when I can call my family ...

In turn, Armaan told me:

I have no choice but to give all my wages to my wife. She uses it to pay bills, pay debts off that her parents had before we got married ... I have only £20 a week that she gives me, which I use for my bus pass, and keep the change in case I need to buy a drink or chewing gum or cigarettes when I am really stressed out ... I do not know what my life means, I do not have any independence, I cannot decide where to spend my salary, or to save ... I am not even able to keep my passport with me ... [M]y whole life is in the hands of my wife and her parents ... I feel so controlled every minute of every day ... I am being suffocated every day.

The degree of powerlessness and lack of control over one's life was a common feature in the lives of the migrant husbands I interviewed. As Armaan indicated, the confiscation of his wages by his wife becomes the site of

transaction: on the one hand, losing his hard-earned wages to his wife and the aspirations associated with these, while, on the other hand, the transfer of funds and power to his wife. The term ‘freshie’ (from ‘fresh off the boat’) (Charsley and Bolognani 2017), which natural-born British Pakistanis use to refer to migrants, including migrant husbands, results in migrant husbands being constructed and positioned as inferior in the social hierarchy within the diaspora community. This speaks to the broader literature, in which scholars have noted that the construction of gender identities occurs through social relations of power and inequality (see Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121). The lack of control over one’s life trajectory and direction in both the immediate future and the long term caused migrant husbands to experience emotional turbulence (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127), which impacted the way in which they saw themselves. Armaan told me:

Sometimes I wonder what being a human means if you are just controlled by somebody else. Your strings are being pulled by somebody else. Maybe some people can and do get to live freely, but if you are someone like me then that cannot happen.

Armaan’s words resonate with those of many migrants – both forced and voluntary – around the world, who experience ‘stuckness’ (Hage 2009) and a lack of power as a result of the interrelation and complexities that arise from systems, bureaucracies, governments, border control and immigration, anti-immigrant sentiments, racial profiling, racial and religious stereotypes, and more (see Castles and Miller 2009; Collins and Bilge 2016). Narratives of migrant husbands contribute to the burgeoning literature on power relations between the Global North and the Global South, whereby modern states benefit from growing inequalities to prevent the movement of people.

Migrant husbands also spoke about the very real effects of being a migrant, which included being made to feel and treated as inferior at the hands of their wives and in-laws and, more broadly, by the community. This is a radical departure from pre-existing norms of marriage and family dynamics in Pakistan, which involve wives moving into the husband’s and/or his parent’s household. Migrant husbands moving into wives’ and/or their parent’s households is engineered as a result of the relationship between British citizenship, generational difference, and the ‘giving’ of the daughter to the migrant husband. It is important to note that the *direction* of power is established through the ‘giving’ of the *British* daughter and the ‘taking’ of the migrant husband. A middle-aged female, Jamila, who had migrated after marriage in 1997, and whose niece had recently married and facilitated the migration of her husband to the United Kingdom, expressed this view to me:

It is not us who has given our daughter to them; we have not put our daughter in a *doli*⁴ and bid her farewell. In fact, they have put their son in a *doli* and handed him to us!

Despite Jamila's niece (sister's daughter) being married to her other sister's son, the role of citizenship, and the power dynamics associated with it, overshadowed the sisterly relationship. In other words, state power in the form of citizenship dominated even the closest of kinship ties. The migrant husband was given to the family of the bride, in some cases married into a bond of servitude. For example, Faisal who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2000, told me that his father-in-law and brothers-in-law would humiliate him in front of guests.

I had never done that job before, and no one had taught me to do it; they just expected me to know about concrete and cement and all this knowledge about buildings ... I couldn't do the job as quickly and properly as the others, and they told everyone I am a *nikumma* [useless] and that my brain was less developed ... [T]hey started to say I'm *pagal* [mad].

Haroon told me:

My mother and father-in-law would always say to me: 'We gave you our daughter, we brought you here [to England], and you will do exactly what we say. If we brought you here, we know how to send you back too [referring to deportation].'

The threat of deportation was a very real threat issued by in-laws, who reminded migrant husbands that they could, according to immigration law, return them to Pakistan. This threat was made real by domestic violence laws and protection for women in marriages with abusive husbands. In-laws would rely on this aspect of the law to file a report of domestic abuse with the police, which would then trigger immigration laws pertaining to satisfying requirements at two years, five years, and ten years of the indefinite leave to remain process. Since the marital relationship would be demonstrated to have broken down, the leave to remain, or settlement right, would be retracted. The threat of deportation in this way heightened the inferiority and submission of migrant husbands, transacting their weakness and subjugation often prior to marriage migration, as well as their anxieties relating to marriage and migration.

Together, Armaan's, Faisal's, and Haroon's narratives speak to Fischer's argument that *izzat* (honour) is based upon control, and, although the most fundamental form of control is the control of women, control of other men of the *biraaderi* (patrilineage) – or, even better, outside the *biraaderi* – is the highest form of control (Fischer 1991: 108–109). Here, Fischer's argument further cushions the notion of migrant husbands being subject to

transaction, in exchange for greater honour. Fischer also argues that, if a daughter is married with honour, she is the primary means for her father to increase his *izzat* (104). This suggests that daughters are used to facilitate the migration of a male from the *biraaderi* through transnational marriage, in order for his control to become a symbol of the British Pakistani family's 'highest' level of *izzat*, further testifying that control, in the form of abuse, may be exercised by some members of British Pakistani families to acquire greater *izzat*. A number of interlocutors from the community who participated in the research also testified to this. Jamila, a middle-aged woman originally from Pakistan but who migrated to the United Kingdom after marriage in 1988, told me:

My sister's daughter got married and worked two jobs to make up the income on the paperwork for the visa, and, now that the son is here, his parents say bad things to my sister. I reminded my sister, we did not give our daughter to them; they gave their son to us!

For Jamila, the *purana zamaana* (previous times/olden days), when the daughter was put into a *doli* and sent to the in-laws' home, were over. Times had changed, and now they had put the migrant husband in a *doli* and brought him home (to England), and therefore had greater authority and power over the son-in-law and, by extension, his family in Pakistan or Kashmir. In Jamila's view, this meant that the husband's parents were not entitled to speak rudely to her sister.

The workplace was another space in which migrant husbands told me about being made to feel inferior, and in which the precarity of their lives played out. Bashir told me how his inferiority as a migrant husband led his employer to take advantage of him.

He knew I would work hard, because I needed the money and did not want to upset my father-in-law if I lost the job ... I washed up till the early hours of the morning, cleaned the tables, swept the floors, and cleaned the bathrooms. I did everything he said, all for £2 an hour ... [A] British-born man would never put up with that, so they would not do this to him; they would never treat him in that way.

Legal British citizenship is employed by many in the British Pakistani community to create a hierarchical social structure in which citizens are deemed superior and incoming migrants are inferior. A class division determined by citizenship is crucial to the Pakistani and/or Kashmiri Muslim community in Britain (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008). My interlocutors often told me, 'We can never be fully accepted as British because they always call us "freshies".' The 'us versus them' narrative between the host society and migrants is often divided along racial and ethnic lines (see Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008). In this instance, however, it is being operationalised by

British-born Pakistanis or Kashmiris against co-ethnics who migrate. What does this tell us about racism and immigration? We learn that, although immigration and racism are intertwined, immigration is in fact racialised to distinguish the British-born Pakistanis and Kashmiris from the ‘freshies’ or the *mangetars* (fancés)⁵ who have just arrived in the country. Such terminology allows British Pakistanis and Kashmiris to assert their authenticity and proximity to British state power, while migrants are placed within the seas surrounding Britain, which strikes resemblance with Gilroy’s (1991) theorization of the ‘Black’ Atlantic.

The difference in treatment between the home and the workplace speaks to Fischer’s argument that the control of men within the broader patrilineage network or community is the highest form of control (Fischer 1991: 108–109), and once more underlines the notion that the *giving* of the daughter establishes the *direction* of control. This is achieved through racial and colonial legacies adopted by British-born Pakistanis and Kashmiris. The workings of honour (*izzat*), and the power yielded from it, is tied to such trajectories. Tracing the genealogy of honour in this way demonstrates that, through the capillaries of state policies around migration, the control of movement of fellow co-ethnics in the home country is in fact a symbol of higher status and translates into the transnational patriarchy identity. Even though this is something that is aspired to by migrant husbands, it is in fact a sinister form of masculinity, often embodied and practised by migrant men of pioneer generations who, after decades of being in Britain and accumulating social capital, are able to facilitate and control migration for younger men, transacting them for greater power within their kin network.

Migrants’ subordinate positions

One of the most important contributions in the literature was made by Katharine Charsley (2005), who argues that migrant husbands have weak positions within the household that they joined upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom. This acknowledgement was made within the framework of the experiences of British Pakistani wives who, in Charsley’s ethnographic account, were left abandoned by migrant husbands after they received indefinite leave to remain in the country. This speaks to the broader literature on the British Pakistani diaspora, which portrays British Pakistani families as taken advantage of by kin in Pakistan (Ballard 1994) – something I have long disagreed with, as the direction of power due to British citizenship lies in the court of British Pakistani and Kashmiri families. Although the accounts of British Pakistani women who are involved in transnational marriages with migrant husbands are invariably valid, questions remain. Why and how are migrant husbands weak? What factors cause their weakness?

What are the implications, if any, of their weakness on their experiences of marriage, migration, and masculinity? Exploring the inner workings of this position of weakness could also provide insights into the power dynamics involved in transnational marriages, particularly between both parties of the families involved in this transnational dynamic, and which can facilitate domestic abuse to take place.

In order to assess this, it is important to consider the perceptions of self-worth and masculinity in Pakistan and Kashmir before arriving in Britain. As a number of my interlocutors told me, their experiences in Pakistan and Kashmir were defined by son preference, labour and earning capabilities, ability to continue the family name, and qualifying for inheritance. Zafar told me:

In Pakistan I was loved by my sisters and mother; everyone would run around me to make sure I was well dressed, well fed, and my parents sent me to school and college, but they did not send my sisters. I was the only son, and, despite being poor, they put their money towards educating me. I was born after five sisters, so, when I came, my parents were really happy: they finally had a son that would care for them and look after them ... [T]his meant that they wanted me to go to England to be able to look after them in the best way ... but, when I arrived here, it was such a shock, because I no longer had people who cared for me like my family. My in-laws were only concerned about how much money I could earn a week for them, leaving my dreams and my parents' dreams broken.

Through Zafar's experience, we learn that there is a high community value for sons, which drives educational investment choices for offspring on the part of their parents. The stark contrast of Zafar's experience in Pakistan prior to marriage and migration with his experience upon arriving in the United Kingdom was shocking, leading to the crushing of his dreams. He went on to describe this as 'feeling like a slave' and 'being owned by his in-laws', as a result of which he felt he had been torn from his family, leaving them without any support. Thus, marriage migration in this instance shattered the previously held values associated with son preference, which led to positive self-worth and a hegemonic form of masculinity, as he was considered the primary breadwinner and provider. Marriage migration through this transnational uxori-local form restructures this entirely.

We are able to assess the disintegration of the hegemonic form of masculinity further through the research findings relating to domestic violence. Of the 62 migrant husbands who participated in the research, all expressed feeling weak upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, both within the household and in relation to family dynamics, and in navigating the British system(s), in which they often felt disadvantaged due to their positionality as migrants from Pakistan or Kashmir. It is important to note

that the broader perception of Pakistani and/or Muslim men and the ways in which both Muslims in the United Kingdom and the Muslim community of Birmingham are viewed, in both local and national discourses, is also important in the analysis of migrant husband experiences, particularly vis-à-vis approaching and accessing state support. Pakistani and/or Muslim men are often thought of as powerful patriarchs, wife beaters, gang members (Alexander 2000; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 119), or terrorists (Abbas 2012). Moreover, the Muslim community in Birmingham are often seen as hardline Islamists (see Abbas 2018), and there is increasing discussion of Islamophobia in both public and academic circles within the United Kingdom (Bi 2022). These intersecting and overlapping social dynamics can intensify the experiences of migrant husbands. Although migrant husbands did at times talk about experiences of racism and discrimination, such as being called ‘Paki Muslims’ or ‘terrorists’ while working as chefs or waiters at takeaways or as taxi drivers, limited English proficiency and lack of knowledge as to how to navigate the British systems(s) were two significant factors that determined their positionality, from the outset. Faisal, a 29-year-old college-educated migrant husband from Islamabad, told me:

I was not very educated and I cannot speak English in a good way, as you can see, so I was treated lower to them [wife and wife’s family] ...; I was lower class. They were not educated but they acted and behaved as though they were higher class because they had British passports.

Faisal’s experience was common among migrant husbands who arrived between the 1990s and 2008, a period when immigration policies were more accommodating. It also demonstrates Robert Blood and Donald Wolfe’s (1968) resource theory, which, he suggests, underpins domestic violence, facilitating coercion and control (Stark 2007, 2010). Those who arrived within the last five to ten years had relatively good levels of speaking and reading proficiency in terms of the English language, however, as they were required to pass English tests as part of their spousal visa applications.⁶ Nonetheless, both groups of migrant husbands – those who arrived between the 1990s and 2008 and those who arrived in the last ten years – experienced abuse, as the structures of silence were maintained by family members as well as the broader community. As a result, much of my fieldwork required me to probe structures of silence.

Some 80 per cent of the migrant husbands who took part in the research had had arranged transnational marriages with a cousin (see also Shaw 2006), or a family relative. In about a half of the cases (45 per cent), my interlocutors informed me that the mistreatment and/or abuse had been directly linked with land in Pakistan, which had been tied to the marriage

contract and/or verbal agreements between family members, which underlines the notion of transacting the migrant husband for land and property. This included the striking occurrence of the manipulation of the *nikaah* (Islamic marriage contract) by British families to implicate land as *haq-mahr* (dowry), thereby extending an otherwise religious covenant to additionally performing as an agreement to the transacting of assets linked with the marriage. Haider, a 26-year-old migrant husband from a village near Islamabad, explained his situation:

Eight months after I arrived here [Birmingham, England] I was desperate to leave the marriage, and had told my parents about the situation ... I told them I could not put up with the daily taunts and constant putting me down, calling me names, saying I was incompetent and incapable. But my dad told me I cannot divorce because the land my father owns would be transferred to his brother [Haider's father-in-law] because it was written into the marriage contract ... I told my father not to agree to this [at the time of marriage] but he thought it [divorce] would never happen so he agreed to including it ... I am now stuck and there is no way out ...

As demonstrated through Haider's narrative, the giving of the daughter's hand in marriage can prove to be a source of power and manipulation channelled and made possible through religious doctrine and items such as the *nikaah* documentation. This documentation, which carries religious significance and authority, locked the assets of migrant husbands and/or their families, which were transformed into material gains and/or financial awards for both guaranteeing the migrant husband's passage to the United Kingdom and/or as a 'security deposit' in case of a marital breakup. In this way, then, the possibility of coercion and control was sealed within the *nikaah* document, facilitating the exercise of intra-family power. The religious authority of the document verifying the marriage between the husband and wife also enshrines the family members' ability to employ the document as a legal contract governing the behaviour of the migrant husband. In the United Kingdom, however, this document has no legal bearing, as the state requires a civil marriage to provide rights to a husband and wife. Based on the *nikaah* contract, couples have the same rights as a cohabiting couple (Sherwood 2020).⁷

Saleem told me:

During the wedding preparations my mother-in-law insisted that we buy a car for my wife ... [W]e had no money, so my dad sold off his land under the pressure to make them happy.

Such accounts provide an insight into the ways in which British Pakistani Muslim families can also take advantage of the families of migrant husbands (who are often their kin), which is contrary to what is understood in the current literature (see Ballard 1994; Chopra 2009, 2013; Charsley 2012; Malik 2016).

It became increasingly apparent from my interviews with migrant husbands that they believed that a significant source of their weakness was the kinship bonds upon which these marriages were socially positioned. In-laws of migrant husbands were often the siblings or cousins of parents, which made it difficult to speak against control but which also, in some cases, added to the shock experienced by migrant husbands, as they had believed that their marriage and migration would be easier solely due to being 'married in the family'. Migrant husbands and their families placed a great deal of trust in their family relatives, which later created difficult conditions for migrant husbands. The transacting of migrant husbands, then, frequently trumped kinship relations, which are often held in high esteem in the community's culture and history.

Joint family household structures, which are common to many south Asian communities in Britain (Werbner 1990), also played a role in increasing the migrant husbands' vulnerability, as migrant husbands would usually move into the joint household headed by the wives' parents. Yassir described in detail the 18 months he had spent in his in-law's house when he first arrived in the United Kingdom:

I was sworn at, called names, and even slapped in front of my wife's siblings and sometimes in front of guests. I was made a mockery of, like one of those monkeys they ask to perform in circuses ... [L]iving together made it harder, because there was the abuse, and then there was also everyone 'watching' me being abused.

As a result of close proximity, the level of control exerted upon migrant husbands also increased in instances when migrant husbands and their wives were able to eventually move out of the in-law's household. Asif told me:

When I was at work, my wife rang me all of a sudden and told me that she and her mother [had] agreed to buy the house opposite her mother's house. She didn't ask my permission ... it was the root cause of all our problems ... [M]y mother-in-law controlled when we ate, when we slept, even what colour curtains we had ...

Migrant husband participants detailed the degree to which they felt the influence of mothers-in-law was a devastating factor for their marriages. Arslaan explained:

My wife asked for my bank cards [which] her mum told her she would keep for us. I told her that, as my wife, only she had the right to my money, but a third person does not ... [I]t was like being married to both the daughter and her mum at the same time. I could not live peacefully with my wife, because her mother was always interfering ... [W]e eventually divorced.

In some instances, mothers-in-law were unhappy with their daughter having married into their husband's side of the family, and as a result, according

to migrant husbands, were actively sabotaging the marriage. Migrant husbands, in their narratives, often described at great length how mothers-in-law would ‘brainwash’ or ‘ear-fill’ (see Mirza 2017) their daughters to think that they were being used by their husbands as ‘baby-making machines’, or as ‘a passport to England’, often transferring their own marital scars and plights in order to turn them against their husbands. Mirza (2017) suggests that this is a form of indirect domestic abuse, perpetrated at high frequency by mothers-in-law. Salma, a 31-year-old married woman with three children who worked as a receptionist at a GP surgery, took part in the research as one of my community member interlocutors. Salma told me about how her next-door neighbour’s mother would instruct her grandchildren, who were three and five years old, to abuse their father (a migrant husband) physically by scratching him and/or pulling his hair. Salma told me she had visited her neighbour to share food from the *hatam* (a form of commemorative prayer) she had held in her home in honour of the third anniversary of her father’s passing. She was horrified that the mother-in-law was ‘training’ her grandchildren to treat their father in such a way. The shock of witnessing such an incident caused Salma to drop the plate of rice she was holding, spilling the rice on the neighbour’s living room floor.

Cultural differences between migrant husbands and their wives were also a determining factor in creating marital instability and exacerbating their weak positions. Such differences were embedded within views about finances, regarding family planning in terms of long-term settlement, and between the intimate and private space within a marriage, such as the preference for particular sexual acts. Rehan shared with me that his wife expected oral sex (husband-to-wife) to be part of their physical relationship, saying: ‘I did not want to leave my faith or my principles to meet her demands. It is simply wrong to commit such acts ...’ Similarly, Faiza’s sister was married to Arshad, her mother’s sister’s son (maternal cousin or cousin on her mother’s side), from their village in Azad Kashmir. She explained how her sister’s attitude to sex was a particular source of contention in the marriage:

Us girls here [in Britain] have different attitudes to sex based on how we have been brought up ... [H]e always refused to perform oral sex, as he said it was immodest and pollutes the idea of sex ... [I]t was something her friends talked about so she wanted to fit in ...

Faiza explained that, despite Arshad’s resistance to performing oral sex, he was not in a position to continue to refuse, as Faiza’s sister said she would divorce Arshad. She had been informed by one of her more ‘religiously educated’ friends that sexual dissatisfaction was legitimate grounds for divorce. Although, in the broader literature, there is little reference to

British Pakistani Muslim attitudes to sex, in Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera's work we gain a small but unique early insight into a young British Pakistani Muslim student being aware of oral sex (2010: 257). Faiza's interview helped to unpick the tightly sewn stitches of sex as a taboo subject within a community that is faced with multiple and often contradictory identity forms, illustrating how, in a globalised, hyper-technological era of information, intimate transactions – including that of oral sex – can be seen by British Pakistani and/or Kashmiri wives as integral to their transnational marriage arrangement.

A number of intersecting factors, then, create a social complex within which migrant husbands feel weak, or weaker than they felt prior to marriage and migration, demonstrating a significant dissonance between the aspirations before marriage and migration and the lived social realities upon marriage and migration. The way in which this weakness translates resonates with Stark's (2007, 2010) coercive control model, which can often lead to indirect forms of abuse (see Mirza 2017). The ethnographic insights discussed here also demonstrate that factors such as lower levels of education, transnational marriages with kinship groups, matriarchal power as well as patriarchal power, and cultural differences can place migrant husbands in weaker positions. It is important to highlight that, although I have thus far presented the how and the why behind migrant husbands becoming weak, which can be framed in line with Stark's (2007, 2010) coercive control model and Mirza's (2017) indirect forms of abuse, it is also necessary to consider any physical manifestations of this weakness for migrant husbands, or what Mirza (2017) refers to as 'direct' forms of abuse.

Domestic violence and silent suffering

Exertion of control by in-laws over migrant husbands extends beyond the immigration and citizenship processes and translates into material structures, and implications within the household. Men moving to women's households upon marriage is known as uxorilocal marriage (Murdock 1949; Leach 1955; Maybury-Lewis 1967; Turner 1979), and can also involve isolation and the severing of ties with the husband's family. There are a number of geographical ethnographies conducted by anthropologists documenting this marital form. In Amazonian societies, the young husband postpones uxorilocal residence as much as he can so that he does not have to assume the passive position of the son-in-law and be dominated by his father-in-law (Maybury-Lewis 1967). In order to successfully dominate the son-in-law, he is 'integrated' into his wife's household and isolated, namely by the severing of his natal family ties (Turner 1979).

Elsewhere, in China, families have sought uxorilocal marriage as a means of solving problems of elderly care, labour demand, and continuity of the male family line in sonless families (Zhang 2008: 114). Since the 1950s the government has encouraged the practice in an attempt to counter the problem of unbalanced gender ratios caused by female abortion, infanticide, and abandonment (Wolf 1985). Among the Nayar community in south India, it has been debated whether uxorilocally married men have rights over their children (Leach 1955; Gough 1959). In Taiwan, recent studies suggest that uxorilocal marriages are a strategy to continue family lineage as well as ensuring labour engagement and, therefore, earning capital for households (Li et al. 2019). Inheritance rights were not afforded to the live-in husbands in Taiwan, however, whereas, in Japan, live-in sons-in-law were able to inherit property and wealth (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995). Importantly, in uxorilocal marriages across societies, parents and kin are crucial in negotiating the terms of the live-in arrangement, whether bridal names are adopted by the son-in-law, whether he has rights over children, and whether he is entitled to inherit property, to name a few examples (see Li et al. 2019). This involvement on the part of senior kin is also present in the case of migrant husbands from Pakistan.

It is important to mention that studies of uxorilocal marriages cited thus far are all rooted in a particular geographical area. In recent years a growing academic focus has shifted to transnational uxorilocal marriage (see Chopra 2009, 2013; Malik 2016). The migrant husbands at the centre of my research are, in my view, involved in transnational uxorilocal marriages, as they move to their wives' and/or parents-in-laws' household, contrary to the virilocal marital norms (Turner 1979) common to south Asian communities. Often virilocal marital forms entail bride price or dowries, which adds a transactional dynamic to the marriages observed across sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and south Asia (see Schlegel and Eloul 1988; Bossen 1988; Anderson 2007; Harrell and Dickey 1985; Singer 1973). Husbands who take up matrilocal residence through uxorilocal marriage are often referred to as *ghar dhamads* (house husbands) (Charsley 2005, 2012; Chopra 2013). The framing of this phenomenon as uxorilocal marriage can lend support to the analysis of this form of marriage migration, as the 'direction of power' is disrupted in and through marriage migration.

This inverse direction of power dislocates the conventional understanding of domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence, which is rooted in feminist discourse and which frames domestic violence strictly as a gender-asymmetrical phenomenon, whereby only men perpetuate violence against women. Male violence against females has been documented and explored widely in both developed and developing regions across the world (Ali and Naylor 2013; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Conway et al. 2013;

Walby 1990: 29; Dobash and Dobash 1998; Dobash et al. 1999; Stark 2007, 2010). The feminist discourse that has determined the definition of domestic violence has been criticised on a number of accounts, including the failure to account for a diverse range of women, such as south Asian women, who may be subjected to abuse by a number of family members due to the complex nature of the extended family network (Mirza 2017; Gangoli and Rew 2011), and the role of women who can perpetrate domestic violence (Strauss and Gelles 1986, 1990; George 1994, 2007; Ogilvie 1996; Anderson 2002; Archer 2000; Brown 2004; Capaldi and Owen 2001; Capaldi and Kim 2007; Hamberger and Potente 1994; Fiebert 1997; Mirza 2017; Kumar 2012). Indeed, Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera (2010: 261) argue that south Asian women are not always victims of oppressive cultures, and that women can take up powerful positions within households (252), supporting the contention that south Asian women and families are not homogeneous.

A number of theories attempt to explain domestic violence. Johnson (2008) proposes a dualism model that distinguishes two types of domestic violence: situated couple violence and intimate terrorism. Intimate terrorism is defined as serious, frequent, and controlling violence that can escalate over time and as gendered male violence against women. Situated couple violence is less serious, less frequent, and not coercive or controlling (see also Walby and Towers 2018). A second theory that attempts to explain domestic violence is Stark's coercive control model (2007, 2010), which describes coercive and controlling behaviour as not always involving physical violence, but as always harmful and gendered male control over female intimate partners. A third theory presented by Walby and Towers (2018) is 'domestic violent crime' theory, which suggests that domestic violence at all severities and of all frequencies comprises coercion and control. Although Walby and Towers (2018) also argue that domestic violence is gender-asymmetrical, they suggest, importantly, that the economic resilience of the victim is more important than the gendered motivation of the perpetrator in determining the frequency of the violence, which resonates with Blood and Wolfe's (1960) resource theory, which suggests that, in marital or intimate relationships, the person who is more resourceful in terms of income, occupational status, and education status may have more say and power in the relationship.

The case of the migrant husband then speaks to these theories and conceptualisations of domestic violence in a number of ways. First, the gender power dynamic is no longer asymmetrical when men are more powerful but, rather, as revealed in my research, when men were weaker, had fewer material resources, and were dependent on their wives and in-laws. Second, the narratives of migrant husbands thus far demonstrate that women can be

involved in either direct or indirect violence and/or control and coercion (see Mirza 2017) of migrant husbands, suggesting that the discourse on domestic violence may need to reconsider the role of women in domestic abuse (see also Rew, Gangoli, and Gill 2013). Third, the social context within which migrant husbands are located, including the complex transnational family network, is not currently accounted for in the theorisations of domestic violence, thereby limiting domestic violence as an act that can be perpetrated only by partners and not members of the family (see also Mirza 2017; Rew, Gangoli, and Gill 2013). Fourth, as a result, power can be seen as not linear and one-directional but as located everywhere, as per Michel Foucault's (1991) scholarship, which places a spotlight on the role of the family in perpetrating domestic violence. Finally, given that, in the case of migrant husbands, obtaining British citizenship is a significant currency held by the wife and in-laws, motivations underpinning domestic violence can be further interrogated. In particular, I interrogate these reflections against theories of domestic violence in the migration context and liminality context. The migrant husband experience is framed in line with Stark's (2007, 2010) coercive control model and Walby and Towers' (2018) domestic violence crime theory, which I posit can be divided into 'direct' and 'indirect' forms of abuse as per Mirza's (2017) conceptualisation.

Here, I build upon my previous findings that migrant husbands experience precarious lives as a result of three factors: the waithood(s) they encounter at different stages of the migration process; powerlessness at the hands of the state, wives, and in-laws; and inferiority in relation to British-born Pakistanis and Kashmiris and senior men in the family and/or community, who are often counted as the pioneer generation of migrant men and/or migrant husbands. Together, these factors widen the spaces within which migrant husbands can be transacted. Although not all acts of abuse against migrant husbands include physical violence, emotional and economic violence is harmful nonetheless, and constitutes coercion and control. In fact, all my migrant husbands interlocutors had experienced indirect coercion and control in some shape or form, whether in the form of the retention of their passports and/or salary, the frequency with which they were able to call and/or remit money to their family in Pakistan, the ways in which they could socialise outside employment and family relations, or their obligations towards their wives and/or in-laws. The way that this chapter distinguishes and advances the aforementioned theories is that British citizenship determines the direction of control and, thereby, the establishing of the coercive control model. Moreover, the argument that wives, mothers, and fathers-in-law can perpetrate coercion and control, and in some cases abuse, pushes the theoretical conceptualisations of domestic violence further by demonstrating that it can be perpetrated by women, including non-intimate partners.

Of the 62 migrant husbands who participated in the research, all told me of instances when they had experienced indirect forms of domestic violence at the hands of their wives and in-laws, and 18 told me they had experienced direct physical forms of abuse. My interlocutors described a range of forms of violence they were being subjected to, which included verbal abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and financial abuse. Of the community-based interlocutors who took part in the research, 38 of the 43 shared cases they were aware of were when migrant husbands had experienced domestic violence (both direct and indirect). The total numbers of cases of abuse reported per abuse type is given in [Table 2.1](#) for migrant husbands, together with the numbers of cases of migrant husbands reported by community member interlocutors.

Although the types of abuse had the same meanings for migrant husbands and community member subjects, I noticed a difference in the interpretation of ‘psychological’ abuse. Migrant husbands were more reluctant to identify psychological abuse, as they interpreted this to mean causing a defect to their mind, which they were adamant had not occurred. For instance, Zahid told me: ‘Their words hurt, their slaps and punches also hurt, but they cannot hurt my mind. I am strong like that; I have to be. I cannot lose my mind.’ Participants who were community-based interlocutors, on the other hand, were more likely to identify migrant husbands as having experienced psychological abuse, often as a result of long-standing abuse and/or the combination of a number of types of abuse.

I collected detailed stories during my fieldwork, which provided me an important insight into the experiences of migrant husbands – experiences

Table 2.1 Types of abuse experienced by migrant husbands and cases of migrant husbands reported by community member interlocutors

Type of abuse		Migrant husbands (n = 62)	Community member interlocutors (n = 43)
Indirect forms of abuse (Mirza 2017)/ coercive control (Stark 2007 , 2010)	Verbal	62 (100 %)	43 (100 %)
	Psychological	28 (45 %)	38 (88 %)
	Financial	37 (60 %)	27 (63 %)
Direct forms of abuse (Mirza 2017)/ domestic violence crime (Walby and Towers 2018) rooted in coercive control (Stark 2007 , 2010)	Physical	18 (29 %)	35 (81 %)
	Sexual	21 (34 %)	13 (30 %)

that were closed off from the world as a result of voluntary silence and invisibility, while what was involuntary silence and invisibility was often created by gendered stereotypes that are still prevalent in society today. Among the interlocutor experiences shared with me, I was particularly struck by the severity of the violence. Munir arrived in the United Kingdom in 2010 after marrying his mother's brother's daughter Aisha. He told me that the abuse started a few days after he had arrived, as outlined in this extended extract from his interview:

I arrived in February ... I remember it was very cold, and, after I spent a few days at home with family and guests, my *mava* [maternal uncle, also his father-in-law] told me that he had found me a job in the local supermarket. I started work a week after I arrived. When I arrived at work with my father-in-law, the manager told my father-in-law that he had decided to put me on the fruit and vegetable stall outside. I was spending long days out in the cold stocking the fruit and vegetables, taking heavy items like big chapatti flour bags that weighed ten to 15 kilograms, to customers' cars. At the end of my first week my father-in-law came to collect me, and the manager gave my salary to my father-in-law. It was £140, so £20 per day of working there. My father-in-law put the bundle of money in his pocket immediately, and I just stood there watching. I was really shocked.

The taking of salaries by fathers-in-law was a common complaint expressed by migrant husbands during the fieldwork, correlating with scholarship on coercive control. Migrant husbands said that such control pierced their ideas about becoming a migrant husband, which I previously termed the transnational patriarch form of masculinity. Munir's narrative demonstrates the erosion of his expectations that he held prior to marrying and migrating to the United Kingdom. Munir went on to explain that he had told his wife that her father had taken his wage, which led her to question her father. The following day, before leaving for work, his father-in-law told him he was not a man as he had 'complained' to his wife, and justified taking his wage as he had given his daughter to him thereby, enabling his migration. Munir's narrative also provides an insight into the generational differences regarding the idea of masculinity and manhood, as the father-in-law perceived Munir's sharing of information relating to earnings with his wife as constituting 'not being a man'. For Munir, it was also important to spend a proportion of his first salary towards expressing gratitude and love towards his wife, which demonstrates the interconnectedness between the businessman and family man components of the transnational patriarch. We learn that these expressions of love are not so straightforward to perform, however, as the migrant husband is situated within a complex social web in which social actors, such as the in-laws, have a significant role to play in the choices and decisions

migrant husbands can, and cannot, make, and –overall – in transacting the migrant husband.

Munir went on to explain:

A few weeks had passed, and I thought I would ask my father-in-law for some money so that I could send to my mother at home, who was unwell. He got really angry and slapped my face while we were sat in the car. I remember I felt my head bang against the car seat window and everything went black ... 'You don't send any money back home; I send the money. Who do you think you are? You've been here a month and you want to act big and send money back home, do you?'

It was Munir's father-in-law's transnational patriarch identity that was being reinforced through the control of Munir's employment, and ability to remit funds to his family in Pakistan. Despite their son having migrated through marriage to the United Kingdom, Munir's family remained dependent on his father-in-law.

Faisal, who came to the United Kingdom in 2000 after marrying a relative who had travelled to Pakistan and, upon seeing him, told her parents she wished to marry him, was granted his spousal visa eight months after their marriage, after which he migrated. Prior to Faisal, four other men from his village had migrated to the United Kingdom. Upon arrival in the country he moved into his father-in-law's household, where his wife was already residing. He told me there were regular arguments with his wife, particularly around her refusing to share details about where she was going, resulting in her name-calling, shouting, and swearing. Such encounters were embarrassing for Faisal, as living in a joint household resulted in his in-laws being privy to the marital tensions. The lack of privacy caused Faisal to experience shame, as the personal and intimate dynamics of his marital relations could be heard by his in-laws, indicating his weaker position in relation to his wife, and therefore his weaker position within the household. He went on to explain how this became interconnected to his relationship with his in-laws:

Her father had got me a job as a bricklayer with one of his friends but the manager kept telling me I was not laying them properly. I had never done the job before but I did try my best. I then started to work at a supermarket stocking shelves for a while. My father-in-law collected my wages and gave me £10 from the packet. Things between my wife got worse and worse. I know she was seeing someone but I also knew that no one would believe me. I saw a packet of condoms in her bag one morning as she was getting ready ... [W]e had not had sexual relations with each other in over three months. But, if I was going to tell someone, who was I going to tell, and with what face? The matter was not something any man could say to anyone because of how

shameful it was. One morning, when we were arguing, my father-in-law came upstairs to our room and started to beat me up. I remember feeling the first punch and kick to my rib area but I cannot remember anything after that. My brother-in-law took me to hospital after ... [T]he doctors said I had broken ribs and jaw and I was bruised everywhere. He [father-in-law] thought it was my fault, that I was doing something to make my wife angry, and that's why she was arguing. He thought he could beat whatever it was that was wrong with me out of me, so that she would stop getting angry. In his eyes, I was harming his precious daughter, who could never do wrong. This continued for a long time: arguments with my wife, my brothers-in-law and father-in-law beating me ...

Faisal's narrative demonstrates the degree of physical violence he experienced upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, which compromised his ability to lead a healthy and happy lifestyle. He went on to tell me the effects of the abuse on his ability to carry out tasks such as feeding himself, as he was severely bruised. He also developed mental health difficulties as a result of the ongoing tensions and violence. Due to his worsening health and drastic weight and hair loss, relatives became concerned and started to speculate about the marital tensions. News soon reached his parents in Pakistan, who requested his father-in-law to send him back to Pakistan. This destabilised the direction of power Faisal's in-laws maintained, as Faisal's family prioritised his safety over their kin relations, and his becoming a British citizen despite the reputational damage this would entail. This removed the ability of his in-laws to capitalise on the aspirations of Faisal's kin in Pakistan, who no longer were invested in his migration. Upon receiving the call from his father, Faisal's father-in-law returned from work and subjected him to extreme violence, which led him to lose control of his bladder. When speaking to me about this ordeal, Faisal was visibly very upset. We paused the interview for 15 minutes, after which he told me he was happy to continue to talk to me. When we resumed the interview, Faisal told me that he could not recall how long he lay on the floor soaked in his urine, and sore from the bruises. When he regained consciousness, he packed, took the few belongings he had from the hospital bed, and left.

I slept in the park a few nights. I went in to one of the chip shops to get some food; I know that one of my relatives worked there. I thought he would give me some food; I was really hungry and hadn't eaten in four days. I had no money either. He was shocked to see me ... I asked if he could offer me some food. He sat me down in his chip shop and gave me food and drink. We then talked about what happened, and I explained the situation. He said he would have a word with my father in Pakistan, and my father-in-law here. He told me that they had crossed all boundaries and had treated me worse than an animal. He took me home, clothed me, and gave me a warm bed. That night

I had a bath for the first time in weeks ... He said I could stay with him for as long as I needed.

We gain a glimpse as to the degree of vulnerability, precarity, and instability migrant husbands can experience, as Faisal was homeless during this period. He told me he was unsure as to who to approach within the authorities to seek help, which indicated the way in which migrant husbands can be found at the margins of society when experiencing such difficult circumstances. Despite this, the role Uncle Ali played in supporting Faisal was critical, as he helped to negotiate with his in-laws to process his indefinite leave to remain in the country. In exchange, Faisal divorced his wife. This was the best resolution, agreed at the community meeting involving senior men within the extended kinship network, held regarding the situation. The fact that the matter had become public knowledge within the community placed pressure on Faisal's in-laws and prevented them from deporting him, as they no longer had control over the narrative. I particularly learnt the significance that a senior migrant husband who was established as a successful transnational patriarch can have for a relatively new migrant husband such as Faisal. Unfortunately, soon after both sides of the bargain had been satisfied, Faisal found that his home, which had been given to him by the council, was set alight in the middle of the night. He narrowly escaped through the bedroom window. He later heard rumours within the community that his in-laws had instructed someone to pour petrol through his letterbox and set his house alight, due to the extreme shame they had experienced. As a result of this incident, Faisal moved to the outskirts of Birmingham, keeping both his home and employment address secret from his community.

For Asif, when his wife showed him support and worked in partnership with him to foster a positive marital bond, both Asif and his wife became subjected to increasing control at the hands of his mother-in-law. He told me:

I married my mother's sister's daughter Amreen and came to England in 2015. We were happy; we would take time out of work on the weekends to sightsee and spend time together. We loved each other. She had an admin job at the council, and when I came [to England] I worked in the local barber shop, as I had some experience of hair cutting when I was in Pakistan. I can make really good patterns that are popular with the young boys here [United Kingdom]. There was tension with my in-laws when I first came. My father-in-law kept my passport and my mother-in-law was pressuring my wife to take my weekly salary. She kept telling my wife that I would go out of control and leave her if she did not receive my salary. My wife was at first easily influenced by her mum and she asked me for my salary, which I was happy to give to her ... [W]hen giving my wages to her, I told her that I wanted to save up to open my own barber shop. She said she would deposit the wages in a joint bank account that we both held. Her mother, however, had other ideas about spending the

money. She wanted an extension to their house and said I should pay for it as a way of paying them back for them bringing me to England ... She wanted us to pay the bills, which we did. We paid for the food in the house for everyone ...

In a similar way to Munir's narrative, Asif's narrative also demonstrates the different ways in which he was trying to establish himself as a successful transnational patriarch by being a family man, while also having plans to become a businessman. These plans were compromised, however, as a result of the way in which his mother-in-law envisaged his role as a son-in-law. She also constantly taunted Asif for not being able to have children, despite there being no medical evidence to suggest he was infertile. This led to regular confrontations, which at times involved his mother-in-law throwing dinnerware in his direction, as well as physically abusing him. Through Asif's narrative, we learn about a powerful matriarch who was oppressive towards her daughter and son-in-law, which speaks to Joseph's (1996) notion that patriarchy can be hierarchised through both gender and age. In this instance, it was a senior woman who was able to exert a significant amount of control and subject younger men and women to oppression. Conventional ideas of the role of women in Muslim societies, particularly within the domestic sphere, are also disrupted, as we learn that women can also be powerful heads of households (see also Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 252; Rew, Gangoli, and Gill 2013; Mirza 2017).

These in-depth narratives of three migrant husbands – Munir, Faisal, and Asif – show that domestic violence (both direct and indirect forms of coercive control and/or abuse) against migrant husbands can occur, and can also be severe. Such narratives are powerful insights into the workings of marriage and power dynamics within a transnational setting, which can create heightened levels of vulnerability for migrant husbands. They also show that not all Pakistani men are powerful patriarchs as conventionally understood and/or portrayed within popular media and academic understandings.

Silent suffering

Although physical bruises were discussed at length within interviews, invisible scars or silent suffering also constituted an important aspect of emasculation. In the broader literature, silent suffering has been shown to manifest in a number of ways. For instance, Turner (1999) documents the experience of male refugees in Burundian refugee camps, who experienced their social roles as breadwinners taken up by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). This resulted in women saying that the UNHCR is a better husband (Turner 1999: 2), subjecting male refugees in the camp to humiliation. Este and Tachble (2009) demonstrate that Sudanese refugee men in Canada experienced difficulty in performing in their role as fathers,

as a result of unemployment, social isolation, and changing roles within the family. There were internal factors that led to their emasculation, such as the drop in social status by performing jobs they were overqualified for, and external factors, such as disciplining their children, for which they became visible in the eyes of the law. For migrant husbands, then, the dissonance between their social worlds prior to marriage and migration, and the lived social realities upon marriage and migration, constructs precarious lives for migrant husbands, in which they experience heightened levels of vulnerability, and even domestic violence.

Contrary to some of the narratives, such as that of Faisal, whose experience became public knowledge within the community, many migrant husbands described their suffering as silent and invisible, which directly speaks to Turner's theory of liminality, as he also refers to liminal individuals as invisible (1967: 108). In my interviews, migrant used terms such as 'I remained patient', 'I would keep quiet', 'I felt depressed and down', 'I did not want to say anything', or 'There was no point in telling anyone' to describe their suffering. The dominant masculine ideal of the transnational patriarch operating in the British Pakistani or Kashmiri community created the ideal conditions wherein any masculine experience that deviated from the ideal was a source of humiliation and shame. Faisal told me:

For many years I could not tell anyone about the abuse. What kind of a man would I be? What would people say? I did not want to bring shame on my father and my family for raising a weak son.

Faisal believed that, if he were to voice his suffering, which included physical abuse, it would bring about shame for his family on both sides of the transnational dynamic. He told me that had his uncle, Ali, not helped him, he would have been ostracised, shamed, and isolated. Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera (2010: 258) have stressed the importance of co-ethnic peer support between men as a form of social capital, which calibrates here with the transactional role Uncle Ali played for Faisal, namely transacting the divorce in exchange for his British citizenship. Having the support of a pioneer migrant husband provided Faisal with greater agency when his marital situation became a public matter within the community. His narrative was confirmed by Uncle Ali, as someone who was indeed mistreated. Without this validation, Faisal was certain he would have been seen as the culprit, as his father would have utilised his authority and position in the community to ensure that his version of the 'story' was the dominant narrative.

The broader narrative of gender dynamics present in British society, particularly those that portray Pakistani men as powerful patriarchs who oppress women, as violent gang members (Alexander 2000), as home-grown terrorists, or as sexual exploiters of young White girls (Kalra 2009;

Archer 2003; Hopkins 2006), also work to silence the suffering of migrant husbands. For instance, Kamraan told me:

My brother had been in a motorbike accident in Pakistan and was admitted in the hospital in Lahore. My family wanted me to send money to pay the hospital fees, so I immediately sent them the money. I did not want anyone to suffer during an already difficult time, but, when I told my wife, she started to argue. She was unhappy that I had sent them my wages ... [T]he argument got really bad and she called the police to remove me from our home ... [W]hen the police came in the house I was sitting in the living room, and she was in the hallway ... she began crying and screaming and told them I had beat her, when I had done no such thing. I promise you, I did not lay a finger on her. The police began to take pictures of her in the hallway. When I came out of the living room to see what was happening, I saw that her *kameez* [dress] was torn, her hair was loose and messy, and she had scratches on her ... I was so shocked. While waiting for the police, she did that herself, and I had no idea ... [T]hey took me to the station, and then two days later I was charged with domestic violence. I explained everything to the solicitor they [government] gave me, but he said her case was too strong ... I was sentenced to four months in prison.

Kamraan told me that he was not believed because the law in this country supported women, not men (see also Hopkins 2006: 342). As a result, Kamraan felt that his experience was not seen as being real or true because 'the police were trained to see only abuse that men perpetrate towards women'. In this way, then, government agencies such as the police and social services, in the ways they operated, also silenced the experiences of migrant husbands.

Hoping for their silent sufferings to be at least visible to God despite being invisible to those around them, migrant husbands sometimes transformed their waitings into spiritual and/or religious waiting (*sabr*). Some interlocutors explained that, when they experienced testing times, they began to conceptualise masculine identity as requiring patience and forbearance, which they hoped would be recognised and rewarded in both this world and the hereafter, in line with Islamic teachings. The spiritual and/or religious space became a solace, a mental and emotional strategy from which migrant husbands drew strength. These aspects of migrant husband experiences are explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

Notes

- 1 Stories shared with me by interlocutors and their families, as well as those shared with me by my own family members, have suggested possible ways of circumventing these policies by way of fraudulent tactics. These include but are not limited to creating fake certificates for English tests and fake pay slips engineered by accountants.

- 2 Note that interlocutors did not refer to themselves as *ghar dhamads* or *ghar jawais*. To define the markers or ‘goalposts’ of liminal masculinity, however, these terms are employed to signify the weak household and community position(s) migrant husbands occupy. The second marker or ‘goalpost’ is the transnational patriarch. It is between these two variations that migrant husband masculinity is betwixt and between.
- 3 The term *ghar dhamad* (house son-in-law) carries overtones of humiliation and shame. I refer to *ghar dhamads* simply as migrant husbands, as they do not refer to themselves in this way.
- 4 Palanquin used to transport the bride to her in-laws’ house after the *rukhsati* ceremony (bridal departure) at the wedding has been conducted.
- 5 Although the term literally means ‘fiancés’, it is loaded with derogatory connotations of a lack of knowledge, cultural backwardness, and immigrant status. It is often used by British-born Pakistanis to refer to migrant husbands.
- 6 Although this may be seen as an example of the state empowering migrants, it is in fact a form of state violence as the immigration system has increasingly become a class-based system, attracting only the best talent and/or immigrants who are likely to integrate into British society. Language becomes a crucial factor in determining one’s ability to migrate and gain citizenship.
- 7 Over the last decade there have been multiple campaigns calling for the United Kingdom to recognise the Islamic marriage (*nikaah*), which would protect the rights of hundreds of thousands of women when a marriage breaks down. The UK courts have continued to state that a civil marriage is the best way to ensure couples have rights under English law, however. Under English law, couples who have an Islamic marriage are given the same rights as a cohabiting couple, which often leaves women worse off, without the property and wealth built during the marriage (Sherwood 2020).

Reasserting masculinity: ‘songs of sorrow’ as practices of resistance

Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War the field of migration has been studied through neoclassic and macroeconomic theories that depict migrants as rational individuals whose decisions to migrate were based on cost–benefit analysis, divorced from emotions at all stages of the migration journey (Montes 2013). Initial explorations around emotion in migration studies focused on stay-at-home women and the psycho-emotional implications of their husbands migrating for labour opportunities, including anguish, anxiety, guilt, and sometimes suicidal thoughts. More recently the focus has shifted to women as migrants, due to the increased feminisation of migration catalysed by the demand in the global care industry (Parreñas 2001, 2005b; Piper 2009). By becoming transnational wives, mothers, and bread-winners, recent studies demonstrate the ways in which male self-esteem has been jeopardised (Gamburd 2002: 190; Parreñas 2005a; Gallo 2006; Hoang and Yeoh 2011). Men’s experiences of migration and the resultant changes to their masculine practices and identities have received little attention, however.

In recent years ethnographies have emerged that have documented migrant men’s experiences in the competitive global marriage market. For example, in documenting the experiences of Vietnamese migrant men in the United States and Vietnam, Thai (2008) demonstrates that, whereas in Vietnam these men were able to enhance their social capital as a result of having migrated abroad, in the United States their status within the racial hierarchy positioned them at the bottom of the socio-economic, and employment, ladder. Similarly, Broughton (2008) finds Mexican rural migrants negotiated their masculine ideals and gender practices in line with the economic, social, and cultural changes that had taken place over the last two and a half decades as a result of neoliberal policies. The negotiation of masculine practices has also been documented among British expats in Dubai, who began to conform to hegemonic masculine ideals in relation to

their wives within the domestic space (Walsh 2011). Kleist's (2010) work with Somali fathers in Canada finds that they felt emasculated in relation to the state, as a result of welfare payments made to their wives and families. In the migration of South Indian migrant husbands to Italy (Gallo 2006), the emotions of migrant husbands are also little explored (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). In both ethnographic case studies, inferences can be made about the men's emotional states. For example, the migrant husbands who took part in Gallo's (2006) study reported that they occupied socially lower positions than their wives since they had obtained citizenship and employment through marriage, rather than on their own merit. They also endured taunts from extended family members in India, who often made claims about the sexual promiscuity of their wives who lived in Italy alone, prior to securing their husband's visas. Although these ethnographic accounts focus on the interplay between transnational migration and gender relations with regard to masculine identities, the role played by emotions of emasculation are yet to be examined in greater detail. Addressing this gap would enrich the study of men and masculinities in migration, in important ways, including providing insights into how gender power relations are impacted outside hegemonic masculinity frameworks.

More broadly within migration studies, existing scholarship considers the push/pull factors of migration, leaving the thick description of the emotional costs of migration poorly acknowledged and scarcely documented. In masculinity studies the prevailing explanation for men's emotional inexpressiveness has been attributed to the gender role socialisation paradigm, which asserts that boys and men internalise cultural messages about what it means to be a male (Wong and Rochlen 2005; Montes 2013: 478). Montes' (2013) work among Guatemalan migrant men shows that the emotional cost of migration was devastating for them, due to the separation from their children and families. The often multiple emotional attachments of migrants to their homelands and new places of residence and the emotional interactions between migrants and members of local communities (Savesk 2010: 867) are crucial to understanding experiences of migration.

Further illuminating the study of emotions have been the emotions evoked and invoked in indigenous poetry (Abu-Lughod 1986; Wyrzten 2015), songs (Raheja and Gold 1994), music, sound symbolism (Feld 1984; Schieffelin 1976), and dance (Hanna 1983). A number of anthropological works have provided insights to the role of laments in funeral cultures around the world. Loring Danforth (1982) traces the laments sung by older women in the village of Potamia, Greece, during death rituals, which express intense grief and sorrow. She describes how these laments are usually sung by women who are not deeply affected by the death, which allows those who are close kin of the deceased, and therefore directly affected, to be afforded an avenue

to process their grief in a structured way, as opposed to wildly crying, wailing, and shouting. Over in the southern Peloponnese region of Greece, Nadia Seremetakis (1990) explored laments among Maniat women in mortuary ceremonies. The laments, she writes, were a way to ‘cry one’s fate’ (1990: 482), a process in which self and sentiment were constructed. During laments, women expressed their pain by beating their chests, taking their scarves off, pulling their hair out, and scratching their arms and face, separating them from the social order (491). In this way, laments constructed a performance of space (Baumann 1977) alternative to the normative social structure, which validated expression of grief without being marginalised, in the everyday experiences within the women’s social worlds. Similarly, Anne McLaren (2008) highlights the performance of grief through bridal laments in China, which were also performed as death rituals and protest suffering. Reserved mainly for women, these laments signalled women’s virtue but could also be performed by men to express grief and sorrow and to protest publicly against the emperor (McLaren 2008).

In my own Kashmiri community within Birmingham, I too have witnessed laments being sung by women in the Mirpuri or Pothwari language at funerals. Such laments are a common aspect of processing grief. Often structured in couplets, women will cite the pain of their friend who has lost her husband, referencing the way the crown over her head has been lost – a metaphor to describe the importance of her husband. Folded within the laments is the public recognition of a lost status for the grieving woman, her prime years now behind her, and the saddening arrival of a new social status in the community, such as that of a widow. The space of the lamentation transcended the lived social reality, like a social cloud whereby old identities were transacted through song, for new ones. I particularly witnessed the singing of these songs in 2017, when I lost my uncle (mother’s brother), to whom my father’s sister was married. Gathering together in the local mosque in Birmingham with women from our extended kin network, while awaiting my uncle’s body to be released from the coroner’s office in order for the *janazah* (Islamic funeral prayer) and burial to take place, elderly female relatives would begin singing laments while my aunt would cry intensely. Often like lullabies soothing the pained infant, laments both provided ointment to numb the grief and an avenue for its expression. They also provided comprehension for understanding the gravity of what had taken place: the loss of a loved one, as well as what was to unfold in all our social lives.

Although laments and music of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990; Raheja and Gold 1994) are often associated with the experiences of women, a number of authors have documented resistance through musical form among men. In the case of a Palestinian hip-hop crew from the Shu’afat refugee camp in Jerusalem, for example, Greenberg (2009) documents the

ways in which marginalised male youth are actively borrowing and adapting from African American hip-hop culture to their socio-political contexts. Hip-hop, then, becomes a tool through which expression of their opposition to the Israeli occupation can be made while also reclaiming their masculinity, as the occupation has led to the widespread emasculation of Palestinian men. In a similar way, Schade-Poulsen (1999) shows that, for Algerian men, the lyrics of Raï songs – a form of resistance music that is a blend of Western and Islamic music featuring male–female relationships, inter-generational differences, the problems of youthhood, and the struggle experienced by Algerian men to find a place in a conflicted society – are crucial in navigating adulthood. The musical space, then, allows for identities to be transacted and exchanged, irrespective of whether they materialise in lived reality.

Within the Indian subcontinent, Qawwali music is a popular musical form, with a group of men singing in Urdu or Punjabi, of whom one is the lead singer (Grover 2015). The lyrics are sung against the backdrop of instruments such as the sitar and tabla and are often rooted in Islamic stories and the experiences of the Prophets. A second musical form is Sufiana Kalam, songs that are typically sung solo with instrumental accompaniment in regional languages including Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, and Gujarati (Burney Abbas 2007). Both musical forms are avenues through which men become involved in emotional expression, which commonly occur in collective *mehfils* (gatherings) (Marsden 2005; Grewal 2014), during which men can become overwhelmed with spiritual connection. Historically, Sufiana Kalam and Qawwali have been produced and performed as forms of political and social resistance (Burney Abbas 2007), particularly against the backdrop of the growing persecution of Muslim religious identity in the Indian subcontinent, as well as intra-community sectarian divisions that consider Sufi practices as outside the remit of Islam. Thus, masculine emotion for Pakistani men embedded within musical forms may not appear as forms of resistance at first sight. For the Pakistani migrant husband, who we know experiences increased vulnerability, precarity, and even abuse, the endeavour to explore possible forms of emotional expression and/or resistance that is expressed through musical performance can provide insights to the (re) workings of masculinity in and through migration. Specifically, what can we learn about masculinity in and through migration if historical musical forms that are culturally embedded within the Indian subcontinent afford migrant husbands the space to express their emotions? My research shows that the parameters of such cultural forms of musical expression are expanded to include migrant experience, which is directly born out of the lack of inclusive spaces within the new home country, wherein migrant husbands feel safe to express their emotions and experiences.

When my maternal uncle passed away in 2017 and I witnessed the singing of laments by women during his funeral rites, I was briefly aware of the migrant husband songs of sorrow, although I had not defined them in this way. As a PhD student at the time, I continued to explore these emotional expressions in conjunction with interviews with my interlocutors, and was struck not only by the similarities between the laments of women during funeral rites but also by the differences. Both forms created enclaves of communities wherein pain and healing processes were engaged (Comaroff 1985; Taussig 1987), and consisted of categories of persons who were in conflict with the social structure, as expressive mourning was frowned upon as it indicated a lack of emotional and bodily control. At the margins of the dominant social structure, then, the laments enabled the construction of alternative spaces, wherein categories of persons could perform resistance and agency but, more significantly, initiate, engage, and enact the process of the reworking of the self. For women in funeral rites, laments assisted the transcending of the grief process to reach a new self, born in and through the funeral rites. In the case of migrant husbands who engaged in what I term ‘songs of sorrow’, it was resistance to the dominant social structure wherein migration processes had inverted their social positions as powerful men in control of their lives and the lives of those around them – typical of patriarchal societies. Instead, their identities were reconstructed and transacted through the constant encountering, and eventual acceptance, of their weak and vulnerable positions.

I found that, through the songs of sorrow, migrant husbands opened up a part of their inner worlds to me, revealing a range of emotions experienced both personally and collectively as part of their daily migrant experiences. These songs were shared in video form, which were entirely edited by the migrant husband(s), performed by men who were migrant husbands and/or sympathisers of migrant husbands. It is not possible to say where in the United Kingdom these were recorded and edited. They were listened to widely by my interlocutors in Birmingham, however, and there are indications, through comment posts on YouTube and what my interlocutors shared with me, that they had reached Pakistan and parts of the Middle East. Male migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in the Middle East from south Asia, who are subjected to difficult working conditions, also engage in performing similar songs of sorrow, which are available on YouTube. Many of my interlocutors frequently listened to the male MDW songs of sorrow in the Middle East, as they were able to draw out the similarities between their experiences (see also Archer 2003: 49). This chapter is guided by the question: to what extent and in what ways do these songs enable migrant husbands to negotiate and reassert their masculinity, which has become unsettled through their migratory experiences? The chapter illuminates our

understanding of emotion in expressions and (re-)formations of masculinity through music and resistance in new ways, enriching the field of ethnic language and music, specifically the anthropology of lamentations. More broadly, the chapter also provides insights into the ways in which aspirations of migrant husbands can be revised and retransacted in and through migration.

Performing sorrow

Writings of migration by migrants expressing their emotions about journeys, arrivals, and departures have been beautifully captured by prose and poetry for centuries (Skrbis 2008: 241). The experiences of Black and Afro-Caribbean migrants on slave ships, for example, gave rise to blues and jazz music (Gilroy 1991). When such genres of music are considered, they are usually associated with a community's collective expression of resistance as opposed to gendered expressions, which is also in line with conventional understandings, both in academic fields and within public perceptions, that men do not express emotion – or, at least, find it more difficult to express emotion (Wong and Rochlen 2005; Montes 2013). In contrast, migrant husbands expressed their emotions during interviews by telling me how they felt inferior and taken advantage of by their wives and/or in-laws. It was only when I was introduced to their songs of sorrow that I began to better understand the significant presence of emotions for migrant husbands' social worlds. In other words, songs of sorrow became a medium through which some migrant husbands were able to express themselves without having to lose their masculinity or male status, as the style and format of the songs – albeit not exclusively on the topic of migrant husbands – had been sung for generations by both migrant and non-migrant men in Pakistan and Kashmir.

The lyrics of the songs were profoundly telling of the role of feelings in migrant husbands' experiences, and thereby the emotive power that songs held, especially with regard to operating as an opening for migrant husbands to channel their feelings. It is important to note that songs of sorrow are not sung by the migrant husbands themselves but by singers sympathetic to the cause of migrant husbands. A particular song, which is available on YouTube, is titled *Mungaitra da Haal* (*The State or Condition of Migrant Husbands*). Although no subtitles are available, the lyrics are complemented with frozen, slide-show-like images. Perhaps counterintuitively, the song was uploaded to YouTube under the comedy category and titled 'Funny Song', which suggests that some within the Pakistani and Kashmiri community deal with the complex situation of the migrant husband through

humour. One of the links for the video has over 42,000 views, while another link has over 74,000 views on YouTube. The song¹ is punctuated with a melodious narrative followed by the main couplet.

I have translated this song of sorrow as follows.

Don't ask about the state of migrant husband when they arrive to England.
It's true, isn't it?

For the sake of coming to England, animal sacrifices are offered at *durbaars* [holy shrines].

'Baba [holy man], please give us the visa. Please help us acquire the visa.'

A repeated prayer.

When the visa is granted they laugh. They laugh as they run back: 'Uncle, uncle, my visa has been granted! Uncle, uncle, my visa has been granted!'

When his family sat him on the airplane and he arrives in the UK, they hire a limousine to collect him from the airport.

They say: 'Our son's arrived! Our son-in-law has arrived! Our beloved is here, our cousin is here!'

One day as a guest, two days as a guest, three days as a guest, four days. The things he has to endure on day five, only he and his God are aware of.

Then, for two years, he will have to stay in service. When he receives his indefinite leave to remain after two years, then there is a lot of conflict between them [the family].

It's a true story. If it's wrong then your hands around my neck [figure of speech].

So then, friends ...

When they go to work, life is really busy for them.

How so?

Early in the morning they set off for work and return after midnight. [X2]

Only to find the wife has made lentils.

Please don't ask about the plight of migrant husbands.

It's a terrible state to be in.

In secret and alone, they sit and cry, they wash all the dishes in the kitchen. [X2]

Tired, they crash into bed.

Please don't ask about the plight of migrant husbands.

It's a terrible state to be in.

The wife goes to work and gets into shape [by going to the gym] and still has 100 criticisms to say. [X2]

And tell us to look after the kids too.

Please don't ask about the plight of migrant husbands.

It's a terrible state to be in.

They tell me to get breakfast for them in the morning, I'll have to, to keep the peace. [X2]

Then I have to deal with my father-in-law's demands.

Please don't ask about the plight of migrant husbands.

It's a terrible state to be in.
 There's one more trouble. Which one you ask?
 Don't ask me about troubles. We sleep on troubles, we endure and tolerate troubles.
 If I come back late from work for the sake of earning more money. It's only worth it if it's 4 or 5 or £6 an hour. But that's rare.
 Then the wife does not let me in. She doesn't open the door.
 'Beloved son of your mother, stay outside today,' she says.
 'You came back late from work today,' in anger she says. [X2]
 'Now I'm going to kick you out of the house.'
 Please don't ask about the plight of migrant husbands.
 It's a terrible state to be in.

This particular song is performed by a popular Pakistani singer called Chaudhry Munir, and recounts the temporal and spatial changes the migrant husband experiences, before, during, and after marriage and migration to the United Kingdom, including the full range of its social implications. This is crucial for the later stages of this chapter, as it forms the crux of my argument – namely that migrant husbands revise aspirations in and through migration, which speaks to Carling and Schewel's (2018) argument that aspirations and desires underpin migration journeys. It is these temporal and spatial shifts that cause migrant husbands' emotional landscapes to also shift, causing them to re-evaluate the resources available to them, for the transacting of their image and reputation as migrant husbands. For instance, the lyrics indicate feelings of hope during the visa application process, which prompt the families of migrant husbands to sacrifice animals at the holy shrines of Sufi saints. The excitement experienced when the visa was granted is described through laughter, joy, and the sharing of the news with uncles and aunts. The excitement quickly shifts to family conflict between wives and in-laws upon arrival in the United Kingdom, however, which is further characterised by long hard days at work and completing domestic chores at home, such as childcare and dishwashing while the wife enjoys visits to the gym. In this section of the song, the lyrics point towards negative emotions due to the shift in household and gender dynamics, mainly associated with men having to complete tasks that are traditionally seen, within the Pakistani community, as falling within women's remit (see also McDowell 2003; Hopkins 2006: 340). Low-paid work and demands from the father-in-law are also cited as sources of hardship. Although the song traces the typical unfolding of events experienced by many migrant husbands upon marriage and migration, the stark difference between the before and after of the ordeal is performed as the source of emotional turmoil.

Heavily laden with sadness and hopelessness, a second song, titled *Mangetar* [*Migrants*], includes the following couplets:

Migrant husbands have lost everything
 For the sake of England.
 They have endured many hits.

**Because of the harshness [from wives and in-laws], they have become weak.
 Migrant husbands have lost their minds.
 Because of the harshness [from wives and in-laws], they have become weak.
 Migrant husbands have lost their minds.**

First they [wives] call them to England.
 Then for the rest of their lives they make them carry burdens.
 First they [wives] call them to England.
 They [wives] put a leash around the man's neck.
 They [wives] put a leash around the man's neck.
 They themselves enjoy life.
 When they get them to carry out kitchen duties.
 When they get them to,
 When they get them to carry out kitchen duties.
Migrant husbands have lost their minds.

The chorus (highlighted in bold) employs the term *daadiya*, which can be translated as 'harshness', or 'strictness', referring to what is inflicted on the migrant husbands by their wives and in-laws. Furthermore, this portion of the verse is followed by 'they have become weak', which is indicative of their perceived emasculation. The second verse in the chorus refers to the migrant husband losing his mind, which points to both the surprise to the 'outsider' (most likely men whose hegemonic masculinity has not been disrupted surrounding the migrant husbands' lack of resistance), as well as the way in which the process of migration has led to the inverse of gender power dynamics, which warrants the losing of his mind. The 'mind' is also loaded with the notion of hegemonic forms of masculinity common to the Pakistani community – its loss signifying the emasculation of migrant husbands.

One of my informants, Saleem, explained how the songs created a space for him to grieve without having to appear weak to his family:

They give me permission to be sad. I listen to them on my own so that I am allowed to be sad and grieve my divorce ... [I]f you are upset in public it shows you are a weak man. But the songs allow me to let these feelings out in my own time and place without anyone thinking that I am weak ...

Saleem's narrative shows that songs of sorrow created a space for him in which his emotions and experiences were acknowledged and enabled him to address these emotions. Moreover, the songs of sorrow for Saleem and other migrant husbands proved to be a medium through which emotion could be expressed, particularly as there was an absence of spaces

available via community or state structures. The songs held a dialectical effect for migrant husbands: although, on the one hand, they allowed for an acknowledgement of the migrant husband's plight, they also provided a safe space for migrant husbands to channel their bottled emotions. In this way, migrant husbands can be seen to carve out spaces of resistance to engage in transacting components of their new migrant identities, which often included heightened emotionality as a result of increased vulnerability and precarity.

The songs also include lyrics, visual signals, or references that can appear to be unkind to women. The reference to carrying out kitchen duties in one of the couplets of the song is followed by a reference to a leash being placed around the migrant husband's neck, which suggests that lamentation around emasculation is concerned with the equalisation or imbalance of gender power dynamics in the United Kingdom, where men are expected to perform household duties. Indeed, Katie Walsh (2011) observes that, among White British expatriates in Dubai, wives told her that their husbands were less likely to perform household duties upon migrating to Dubai, despite them previously being comfortable to do so in the United Kingdom. Walsh infers that the culture in Dubai informs the household division of labour, to which husbands were conforming despite their British upbringings. In this way, the lamentations of the migrant husbands indicate upset towards increased household duties, which they were not familiar with while growing up in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Although this could form aspects of their upset and cultural shock, the entirety of their experiences are not channelled through such songs. For example, in the videography of this song, which complements the lyrics, we see the migrant husband being physically abused by the father-in-law when he brings him some water, which he accidentally spills. In this scene, we see the wife and mother-in-law sat beside the father-in-law eating dinner. The issue, it seems, is not the equalisation of



Figure 3.1 and 3.2 Still images used in the videography of the Song of Sorrow depicting an emotional migrant after he was physically abused by his father-in-law.

gender power dynamics but the servitude and expectations around household duties, to which the migrant husband's lamentations are directed. The migrant husband is then seen to be crying in the following scenes as he washes the dishes.

Solidarity with fellow migrants

During interviews, migrant husbands shared that listening to songs of sorrow helped them feel better, as they became aware that their experiences were not unique but, rather, experienced by a collective of migrant husbands who also had similar experiences. Shoaib told me:

One day I was at work, and this man who is a regular customer showed me and my colleague a song about men like me. He knew what we were going through without me having to tell him. It is common knowledge that men like us [migrant husbands] suffer, but it is not spoken about, so people try to talk about it through the song. They like to communicate that they understand, and that they support you by showing you the song and listening to it.

Shoaib made mention of the silence around migrant husband experiences due to stigma, shame, and the clash of ideas between sending and receiving states. He told me the songs would be shared through WhatsApp with fellow migrant husbands, some of whom had a group with which they shared information about new job opportunities in the community, and any new updates about citizenship and immigration rules. He also told me he would attend monthly *mehfils* (gatherings) at a friend's house, which involved the sharing of food, collectively listening to 'songs of pain and sorrow', and reciting poetry in Urdu, Punjabi, and Pothwari, which embodied the personal and emotional challenges they confronted in their daily lives.

We listen to the songs together and also sing our own. We get together and discuss our struggles and try and help each other. It's a nice way. Music helps us to talk about our struggles, to let the emotions out.

Omar's narrative provides a deeper insight into the significance of the *mehfils*:

It is a really nice evening. We make tea and serve it during the gathering. Most of us don't eat well because our wives have kicked us out, so that one night is like Eid for us. We have good company, good food, and good music, and we feel love and support. It is the only thing we have to look forward to, and, for most of us, it is the only good thing in our lives.

Participants' narratives around songs carried overtones of their expectations before and after marriage and migration. Shoaib told me:

The songs allow us to talk about how our dreams have been crushed and the bad treatment we receive. We did not expect this treatment before we came to this country; we thought we would have a good life here, but we are treated badly ... [W]e work long hours in our jobs, then we go home and have to wash the dishes and look after the kids, and we have no money,...

The expectations of what life in the United Kingdom would be compared to the lived realities migrant husbands experienced upon migration were channelled through the performance of songs of sorrow. The songs act as a tool for communicating personal and collective hardship, and represent the destabilising and unsettling tone of the migrant husband experience. At times some migrant husbands even turned to the songs as a form of supernatural medium, with powers to interpret or forecast their most intimate turmoil. The songs form a type of protective armour for participants, who often relied on and felt comforted by the distance between the songs and their personal positionality, which protected their masculine identity – or, at least, their visions of masculine identity. There were also subtle tones of the temporal aspect of the hardship, as the migrant husbands aspired to overcome their difficulties and become the men they were ‘supposed to be’.

The visual aspects of songs of sorrow also constructed solidarity among migrant husbands, as they were able to see men visibly upset and in vulnerable situations similar to their own. For instance, in the song titled *Mangetar*, the YouTube video begins with the migrant husband elated to have received his visa; as the song proceeds, however, we see a repeated image of a migrant husband in tears. The lyrics, together with the images, tell a powerful and evocative narrative of the migrant husband’s circumstance, creating a sense of solidarity between migrant husbands, who can relate to one another.

The videography tells the story of the migrant husband in a powerful visual format, particularly underlining the multiple and chain-like transactions that underpin the migrant husband experience. In the opening scenes the migrant husband is shown to arrive at Birmingham Airport. He is then shown arriving at the home, where his father-in-law greets him first, placing a flower garland around his neck and congratulating and welcoming him on his arrival in the United Kingdom. The scenes that follow show the migrant husband working in multiple jobs. First he is shown to be chopping meat in a butcher’s shop, where he wipes the sweat on his forehead. He is then shown to be working a second job as a tailor, sewing traditional Pakistani clothing (*salwar kameez*). The migrant husband is then shown to be working a third job at a Pakistani supermarket, where he diligently stocks onion bags on to the outdoor vegetable display. When customers present him with a receipt to prove payment for a bag of onions, he is seen to transport the bag of onions to the customer’s car.



Figure 3.3 A still image used in the videography of the *Song of Sorrow* depicting an emotional migrant husband as he makes a call to kin in Pakistan.

The migrant husband is then shown arriving and handing over his wages to his wife, who keeps the cash and returns the change, with which the migrant husband purchases a few cigarettes from the local shop. This scene is especially evocative of emasculation, as it implies that the migrant husband is given a meagre allowance from his wife rather than sharing the earnings as co-equals in a marriage.

The video continues, showing the migrant husband smoking a cigarette, after which he returns home to prepare dinner. In these scenes, the migrant husband kneads the dough, makes chapattis, and cooks curry, all while the wife is applying lipstick. It seems that at least one part of the upset for migrant husbands is their engagement in household chores, which are usually seen to fall within the woman's remit. Some aspects of his emotional distress are premised on the rupture of the traditional division of labour determined by patriarchal norms. The inverse gender dynamics in his new home leads the migrant husband to perceive himself as being emasculated. Given that the following scenes show the migrant husband serving dinner to his wife and in-laws and subsequently being physically abused by the father-in-law after accidentally spilling a glass of water, however, it is more likely that the experience of violence is the major cause of grief for the migrant husband.



Figure 3.4 and 3.5 Still images used in the videography of the Song of Sorrow depicting the migrant husband handing over his salary to his wife, and the wife returning the pennies.

The final scenes of the music video show the migrant husband tiptoeing down the stairs carrying luggage. He is seen wearing the traditional Pakistani attire of *salwar kameez*, whereas in previous scenes he wore a shirt and trousers. This scene reflects a rejection of English life, which interweaves the legacy of colonialism and, specifically, colonial masculinities (Kalra 2009: 113), as the English man wearing a trouser suit is a symbol of power on the Indian subcontinent. The migrant husband is then shown to be running towards the entrance of the departures gate at Birmingham Airport, from which the viewer gathers that the migrant husband is returning to his homeland of Pakistan – an escape from his perceived tormenters and his disillusionment with life in Britain.

The depiction of the role of the father-in-law in this music video is an important one to highlight, as much of the transacting of the migrant husbands is carried out, or negotiated, by him. The father-in-law is the first to greet the migrant husband at the airport and celebrates his arrival by placing a colourful garland around his neck. Scenes of the father-in-law relaxing and enjoying life by eating sweets and smoking *hooka* punctuate the scenes in which the migrant husband is shown to be labouring away at several part-time jobs, with little training or proper labour protections. It is also the father-in-law who the migrant husband pours water for at the dinner table, and, finally, it is the father-in-law who raises his hand to slap the migrant husband. The father-in-law is shown wearing a formal blazer, shirt, and tie, which is representative of higher class and accomplishment compared to that of the migrant husband, and can also be seen as imitating the colonial legacy set out by the British in their rule of India (see Dumont 1980). The stark juxtaposition between the migrant husband and his father-in-law – in activities, employment, level

of authority, attire, and emotionality through visible portrayals such as crying – is indicative of the generational and age differences in masculine experiences in the British Pakistani community. Further, it supports the concept of the ‘transnational patriarch’ being achieved by the father-in-law, who retires to his leisurely activities while still asserting control over his kin and assets. The negotiation or transacting of citizenship through the father-in-law by means of giving his daughter to the migrant husband carries overtones of the way the once colonial powers used to subject people in the Indian subcontinent.

Makings of a community

A third song available on YouTube is titled *Pothwari Sher Mangaytaran na Hal Pardesiya* (*Pothwari Song about the State of Migrant Husbands Abroad*). This song is ten minutes and 20 seconds in duration and, unlike the previous two songs, a static image of a rose appears throughout the song.² Also, unlike the first two songs I examined, this song makes specific reference to the genre of the song as Pothwari Sher. Although Qawwali music has received attention within academic discourse, Pothwari Sher have not. Since similar musical instruments such as the sitar and a main singer are present, Pothwari Sher can be viewed as derivatives of Qawwali music. There are key differences, however. For example, these songs usually involve three people: the singer, the sitar player, and the drummer, who uses a clay water pot to produce drum beats similar to the tabla. Qawwali, on the other hand, is produced by a large team of musicians – often more than ten men – who have received classical musical training. Moreover, although Qawwali originates from central Pakistan and has a reach both across the Indian subcontinent and around the globe, Pothwari Sher originate in the northern areas of Azad Kashmir, where Pothwari (a dialect of Mirpuri, and also known as Pahari) is spoken (see also Lothers and Lothers 2010, 2012; Hussain 2015; Rosowsky 2015, 2016, 2017). As many of the Pakistani and Kashmiri communities in cities such as Birmingham and Bradford migrated from this region, Pothwari Sher are popular particularly among the elder generations. I grew up with Pothwari Sher, as my father often listened to them on cassettes, and later, as technology evolved, via YouTube. The songs he listened to were of the stories of the Prophet Muhammad or the Prophets. It is only now, as I write this book, that I remember a diverse range of Pothwari Sher beyond those the migrant husbands shared with me. Perhaps the boundaries of academia and fieldwork compress us as academics to focus solely on what lies within,

when that which lies beyond may be just as important in understanding dynamics in the field.

I have translated the third song as follows:

Have it, the life and the conditions of England.
Friends, based on the request of many friends, I am recording this cassette.
Life in England is such that you get married and leave Pakistan.
But, when life passes, it passes with great difficulty.
My friends, I am presenting a joint song by poet Jahangir Afzal, some are my own and some by Wahid Qasim, and we present it in a timely fashion:

The Whites have made a new law,
Caused us young to be wasted away.
With great difficulty we found a British marriage proposal
That too the evil people [relatives] convinced to reject.
I was sat with such immense hope
I had already made my passport.
My white complexion was not enough to convince the beauty [wife],
Our white complexion was not enough to convince the beauty [wife].
They [in-laws] considered me their own and called me [to England] as a son-in-law.
She kept her parent's honour and shame
And married in Pakistan.
My horror, my horror,
My horror, my horror.
God, God,
God, my horror.

I thought I was doing a good deed
But it was actually my harm.
By marrying into my relatives it was saving their honour.
My horror, my horror,
My horror, my horror.
God, God,
God, my horror.

Tall and handsome they want, I too was young and handsome.
What atrocity have the Whites leashed upon us?
The English say from their homes 'Come';
'Our queen states'.
Make sure you are 21 years of age;
Don't you dare be any younger.
Oh, we don't know what to do, we don't understand Jhangir.
Oh, what shall I do, I don't understand.
This law will cause me my death.
I didn't look at intelligence, beauty, nor the height [of the wife].
My horror, my horror,

My horror, my horror.
 God, God,
 God, my horror.

They say don't go out, don't meet anyone.
 I am such an idiot, they act like the king.
 My horror, my horror,
 My horror, my horror.
 God, God,
 God, my horror.

This, my friends, was the voice of the man who they come and marry,
 and the girl says he is uneducated and how she is troubled as a result. But,
 my friends, when a man leaves to go to England, he forgets how his door
 looked. My friends, he forgets the voice of his mother and father. He calls.
 How does he call? He says:

'When I arrived in England, friends, I changed.
 That fair-faced, innocent-looking woman –
 What awfulness was sent to me?
 From afar she looked very simple-minded;
 Then she startled me, and I jumped in shock.
 I broke my back; I couldn't deny £200.
 She made me work two shifts back to back.
 I couldn't drink cigarettes or tea.
 My madam takes all my wages.
 She who wouldn't say a word in Pakistan only yesterday,
 Today she owns me.
 May God give her good manners and show her the right way.'

My sisters and mothers listening, may you be blessed for the sake of God and
 his Messenger [Muhammad]; remember your motherland, remember your
 religion. Whoever does does not go without, nor will he be betrayed. May
 God give you good manners. He said, that is the voice of the young man:

'I had not yet completed the washing of the clothes
 That she came from upstairs.
 "I wanted to tour the UK," she said,
 "But now I've lost my sparkle."
 Before she used to shout at me and taunt me
 But today she showed me her two hands [she slapped him].
 She already had my passport,
 But now she also threatened me with the police.'

There [in England], when you say something wrong, 9. 9. 9. They dial
 number nine three times, and within nine minutes they come and take us
 away. My friends, may God give them good manners and may God drive our
 troubles away. He says:

'She had my passport from before;
Now she topped that with the threat of the police.
But what is the real issue [the police ask]?
"England, England," Jhangir cries [she says].
"England, England," Jhangir cries [she says].
She has even got my father to repent his sins.'

"He wants me to wear the burka, not trousers and a shirt." [the wife's narrative]

"He doesn't want to follow me; what can I do?" [the wife's narrative]

My horror, my horror,

My horror, my horror.

God, God,

God, my horror.

"Nor does he know how to drive or cook." [the wife's narrative]

"He can't even speak English." [the wife's narrative]

My horror, my horror,

My horror, my horror.

God, God,

God, my horror.

There are a number of significant aspects of this song that open a window to the experiences of migrant husbands, especially how they forge together to build a community. First, the inclusion of various positions and voices in the narrative not only add a theatrical aspect to the song but demonstrate a coming together of men to speak on the issues that shape their new, post-migration lives. From the outset of the song we are introduced to the narrative of the lead singer, who declares that the song is a compilation of his verses along with the verses of two friends: Jhangir Afzal and Qasim Wahid. Throughout the song the narrator (lead singer) – whom we have no name for – regularly punctuates the song with narration against slow mellow music. In his narration, he is supportive of the plight of migrant husbands and reverts to communal prayer. He calls on God to bless the wives of the migrant husbands with 'good manners'. Although no prayer or passage from the Qur'an is quoted in this prayer, which is a short sentence, it suggests a moral and religious high ground that the singer asserts over the British Pakistani wives of migrant husbands. The lyrics demonstrate a possible (re)structuring of gender power dynamics, drawing on misogynistic tropes, and indicate community-making practices that draw on dominant forms of masculinity common to the Pakistani community.

The second voice we hear is that of Jhangir, the main protagonist. We are first introduced to Jhangir in the fourth stanza, when his friends respond to his troubles as not knowing what to do. This indicates that Jhangir, who

also co-authored some of the verses of the song, may have been a migrant husband and turned to his friends for advice. The second time we meet Jhangir is in the 11th stanza, through the narrative of the wife, which is sung by the male singer. Here the male singer includes the wife's narrative, and she is requoted as complaining that her husband Jhangir is concerned only about his migration to England. Jhangir is therefore shown to recite 'England, England', like a prayer he has memorised.

We learn a great deal about Jhangir's position throughout the song. For instance, we learn of his expectations before marriage and migration, namely that he would be treated well because he married in the family and kept the honour of his parents and wider family members. He expected this to work as a 'good deed', but he finds that he has actually brought harm to himself. The immigration laws are referred to as being passed by the queen herself, and so the migrant husband is juxtaposed against not only his wife but also the head of state, who is also a woman. This has a profound impact, as the migrant husband says 'This law will cause me my death' but also refers to the wife 'owning' him when he arrives in England, whereas in Pakistan she was a silent, shy bride, 'appearing to be innocent'. This dichotomy between women of the East and women of the West seems deeply embedded in migrant husband views within this song. It is further supported by the multiple references of the migrant husband having 'fair skin' and describing his wife to also be 'fair-skinned', which is yet another feature of the colonial legacy among the British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities rooted in British colonial rule of India, during which the British established hierarchy among different groups (see Dumont 1980). Most of these hierarchies interweaved physical attributes such as fair skin, which was common among higher castes/classes, as their exposure to the sun was minimal due farming roles being predominantly assigned to, and performed by, the lower castes or classes (Dumont 1980). Through migration and the settlement of diaspora communities, such ideas, deeply entrenched in the colonial legacy, have travelled (see also Clifford 2001; Kalra 2009) as part of the cultural migration, continuing to thrive among the third and fourth generations of the British Pakistani diaspora. The reference to being slapped by his wife does not include any mention of being protected by the law, which corroborates the views expressed by many migrant husbands during my interviews: that women are protected by laws against domestic violence while men have no safety net. This is further highlighted in stanza ten, in which the wife calls the police over trivial matters such as not taking a liking to the migrant husband's ability to converse. The chorus also provides an insight into the migrant husband's situation, as he repeatedly refers to the marriage and migrant experience as a 'horror', and calls on God to alleviate his situation. The makings of community in

this song oscillate between the past and present, changing social landscape across the transnational plane, particularly changing gender dynamics, and the proximity and distance to the state and law, all of which are threaded together by colonial legacies.

The third voice we are introduced to in the song is that of the wife, who is quoted in the song by the male singers, and who we first meet in the ninth stanza, in which she is presented as an unsatisfied wife who had 'lost her sparkle'. The sentence structure implies the wife blames the husband for losing her sparkle and not being able to travel. We then meet the wife once again in the 11th, 12th, and 13th stanzas, which describe the wife having called the police, who respond by enquiring as to the cause of the marital breakdown. She tells the police he cries 'England, England', as though he is an obsessed man, which provides the impression to the police that the migrant husband is interested only in acquiring citizenship. She is then quoted as identifying the problem behind her marital breakdown as refusing to wear the burka as per her husband's wishes. The migrant husband at this point of the song is a bystander and is stripped of his voice, indicating that the arrival of the police leaves him with no rights, and in no position to fight an already lost battle. The wife is therefore presented as employing tropes and ideas around the 'oppressed Muslim woman', who is forced to wear the burka by the husband (see also Hopkins 2006: 343). In highlighting the wife's ability to use tropes to her advantage, we come to learn in the following stanza that the migrant husband (Jhangir) did not ask her to wear the burka. She is then presented as complaining that her husband does not know how to cook or drive, or speak English, which is a cause of great distress to her. The song ends with the presentation of the wife's position, which is symbolic of her voice being the only one that matters to the law and the police. In this way, the migrant husband's 'horror' and distress are muted as a result of the wife's ability to use oriental (Said 1978) tropes of the oppression of Muslim women by Muslim men to her advantage. Community making, then, is carved in and through the tension between wives, who are supported by the state, and migrant husbands, who are ostracised and vilified by the state, not only through immigration policies but also through portrayals of the Muslim man in newspapers, which speak to the discourse on Islamophobia.

The second important aspect to highlight is the way in which God is called upon throughout the song, which points to the employment of religious symbols and practices as a common and reoccurring theme. One of the verses calls on God to bless women with good manners, which speaks to the wealth of studies that have documented the extent to which men can employ religion to control women, especially within Pakistani Muslim communities (Hopkins 2006: 338). As Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera

(2010: 261) note, however, Pakistani Muslim women are not always victims of oppression (see also Hopkins 2006: 343), which are often viewed within a Eurocentric interpretation of freedom (see Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 254). It is also crucial to remember that songs of sorrow can offer a safe space within which men *express* their feelings. Such expressions are documented by Raheja and Gold (1994) in songs sung by Indian women, wherein discussions about skinning their husbands alive as a punishment for cheating also featured. Songs of sorrow, as found in my fieldwork, should be interpreted in the same way: as a space in which men can express their feelings and exercise resistive agency (see Holland et al. 1998). We can argue, however, that expressing feelings is a reflection of an individual's inner psychological state, desires, and anxieties, and thereby an extension of the individual. Thus, for the migrant husbands to be pleading with God to give women good manners is suggestive of the realignment of control and subordination they may wish to have over women, and, broadly, their desire to restructure the gender power dynamics in their favour (see also McDowell 2003; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008). Cultural forms of masculinity encased within religious calls seem to bring together men as a community.

The third aspect to highlight is the way in which the song demonstrates the communal dimension of marital life. We hear the migrant husband asking his friends for advice, the involvement of parental honour and shame, the transnational dynamic of the marriage as being subjected to the norms of Pakistan and the United Kingdom, and the involvement of British law, the British state's queen as symbol of sovereignty, the role of the police, and female power. This aspect is indicative of the sheer range of stakeholders involved in the marriage and husband's migration experience, which provides an in-depth nuance to the feeling of entrapment migrant husbands have shared with me during fieldwork. In this way, we learn about the different spaces in which migrant husbands can feel subjected and/or feel inferior, and how these intersect and affect the masculinity of migrant husbands. The *mehfil* (gathering) for one is a safe space, whereas the space of the home is a hostile space in which the wife is abusive, and the state can intervene if the emergency services are called.

Through this song we also learn of multiple aspects forming a powerful narrative that outlines different characters in a migrant husband's life. In this way, the migrant husband's lived reality is recreated in this song, as per the migrant husband's *truth* (see also Seremetakis 1990). In doing so, migrant husbands form a community of support, as the oppressive roles that in-laws and wives can play in the private sphere are brought out into the public sphere. In other words, the behaviours of wives and in-laws, which are often concealed in the domestic sphere, are revealed through song and

made public knowledge. The impact of this is twofold: first, migrant husbands come together as a collective, publicly reclaiming their presence; and, second, they are juxtaposed against the ‘oppressors’, perceived variously as the in-laws, wives, and the state. The state is referred to as the ‘White’s law’, and later the ‘queen’s law’, which is difficult to meet the requirements for in order to obtain citizenship. Once more, this positioning of the migrant husband in contrast to the ‘Whites’ or the ‘queen’ carries overtones of us and them, ‘other’ (Said 1990), and a feeling of not fitting in and/or being accepted. This is further telling of the way in which migrant husbands view themselves as a community marked by ‘othering’ through identity markers, such as ethnicity and citizenship status. Songs of sorrow, then, become tools of resistance and agency employed by migrant husbands to counter the transacting they have been subjected to, retransacting their identities, narratives, and – ultimately – masculinities.

Reassertive space(s)

Collectively, songs of sorrow, combined with the narratives of migrant husbands I interviewed during my fieldwork, underline the importance of song and music for migrant husbands, especially against the backdrop of a lack of support from relevant British institutions after marriage migration. Songs of sorrow are not only employed as a tool to carve out a social space for migrant husbands to discuss their difficulties and support one another; they are also used to maintain ideas of hegemonic masculinity that exist as part of the patriarchal cultural notions in the Pakistani community. I question, however, the extent to which, and how, these songs enable migrant husbands to negotiate and reassert their masculinity. I have previously suggested that songs of sorrow provide acknowledgement of the plight of migrant husbands, which in turn allows for the expression of their sadness, depression, anxieties, and grief. It is this process of acknowledgement and comfort, as well as the provision of a space in which these emotions can be expressed, experienced, and shared, that facilitates the negotiation and/or reassertion of masculinity.

The singers, who also exercise the role of the narrator of the plight of migrant husbands, are crucial mediators in providing acknowledgement and comfort to migrant husbands. These performers affirm that this is a reality for migrant husbands, and that, if there was any suspicion relating to the plight of the migrant husband, as in the first song, he would be happy to accommodate the hands of those who suspect the genuineness of the story around his neck. Although this is a figure of speech, it is important to note that the singer opens himself to violence to be able to tell the story of the

migrant husband. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the narrator specifically evokes an image of being strangled, which is where, physically, the voice box and vocal chords are situated. Thus, the narrator is also saying that one would have to physically destroy the source of his voice to prevent him from speaking out about the truth of migrant husbands. Such a commitment to speaking the truth of migrant husbands, particularly in public, allows migrant husbands to feel supported and experience solidarity.

Importantly, the acknowledgement of the plight of migrant husbands simultaneously pertains to the abuse they experience and to a rigid set of masculine ideals, which can view women as home makers situated in the private sphere. A large part of the acknowledgement and comfort that songs of sorrow provide for migrant husbands, therefore, is directed towards the shift in gender power dynamics, and the emotional instability that arises as a result. In the first Song of Sorrow I translated earlier in this chapter, the opening stanza describes a migrant husband going to work early in the morning and returning from work to find that the wife has cooked lentils for dinner. This is an eye-opening stanza, as it illustrates the dissatisfaction of the migrant husband at lentils for dinner, which is seen as a basic food type in the Pakistani and Kashmiri community, especially by British diaspora standards. We learn about the (unmet) expectations of migrant husbands, which includes having a basic dinner cooked for them by their wives when they return from a long day at work, as opposed to a luxurious dinner probably consisting of a chicken or meat dish. Due to references to the expectation of the wife cooking dinner and being in the kitchen, this stanza reinforces patriarchal views of men's and women's roles, and, as a result, it informs us of the nature of the grounds of emotional instability for migrant husbands. In some ways, the role of patriarchal views and ideas may underline migrant husbands' trauma.

The patriarchal and traditional views of the role of men and women are carried forward in the second stanza, in which the migrant husband describes sitting and crying alone, washing the dishes, and then crashing into bed. The lyrics are complemented with images, which help illustrate the migrant husband's plight. One could also argue that this stanza is reflective of migrant husbands being overworked, as they return home after a long day's work to wash the dishes. Egalitarian couples of the twenty-first century will work and share household duties (Walsh 2011), however, which relegates this stanza to lean more towards carrying patriarchal overtones. The third stanza describes the nature of young Pakistani women who work and attend the gym to get into shape/stay fit, as a result of which child-care responsibilities fall to the husband for this time period. Once more, it appears that the source of the migrant husband's distress is the progression of women's independence and autonomy, and the husband having to care

for his children inside the home, while the wife performs outside the house (see also McDowell 2003; Hopkins 2006: 340). The fourth stanza also follows on such overtones, as migrant husbands are referred to as having to make breakfast for their wives.

The melodious chorus is then followed by a storytelling narration with a soft beat, which details the nature of the low-paid jobs, and the migrant husband being prevented from entering the home after work by the wife if he is late. The wife's 'voice' is included in this section – 'Beloved son of your mother, stay outside today' – which places the wife in direct contrast to the migrant husband's mother, as well as carrying overtones of the conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law common in Pakistani communities. There is also a reminiscent aspect to this line in the song, when migrant husbands have left the comfort and care of their mother, to experience 'harsh treatment' by their wives. The music peaks again, and the final stanza reifies migrant husbands not being allowed home due to coming back late from work.

In the second song, titled *Mangetar (Migrants)*, the sixth stanza refers to migrant husbands called to England and being made to carry burdens, as a result of which they forget about their homeland. In these verses, there is a subtle attempt to give the impression that the migrant husband migrated as a result of the wife's wishes. For example, stanza seven begins with 'First wives call them to England, then for the rest of their lives they make them carry burdens'. It is important to note that, in transnational marriages involving migrant husbands, there is in fact involvement of the family of both the wife and the migrant husband, as well as the migrant husband's own desire to migrate. The construction of this verse in stanza seven to suggest that the migrant husband is imported by the wife is telling with regard to the direct relationship of trust and dependence in the marriage, as a result of which the migrant husband embarks on the migratory journey to the United Kingdom. Furthermore, this verse is also indicative of the intimate relations and conversations between a migrant husband and his wife. A husband speaking in this way demonstrates that the wife provided assurances to the husband before marriage and during the visa application process, easing his anxieties about migration to and settlement in the United Kingdom after marriage. This also resonates with the many migrant husband interlocutors who told me about the conversations they had had with their wives-to-be before marriage.

In the eighth stanza of the second song, wives are also described as putting a 'leash around the migrant husband's neck'. Here, the migrant husband is likened by the singer (narrator) to a dog under the control of its owner, thereby illustrating the migrant husband's social and emotional position. In this way, this is closely reflective of the migrant husband's view and

self-description of being treated like a dog – a vulgar description. In interviews, migrant husbands often described their experiences in such a way. Another common trope and term that was employed during interviews was that of the ‘slave’. In a similar way to the first song, both the second and third songs carry overtones of traditional patriarchal views about gender roles, with the third song also prominently making such references to wives. For example, in stanza seven the wife is referred to as the ‘simple-minded’ ‘innocent-looking woman’ who was in fact a ‘madam who took all my wages’ and who ‘owns me’. Stanza eight is a prayer to calling on ‘God and his messenger Muhammad to bless women with good manners’. In stanzas ten and 11, the wife is referred to as strategically playing on stereotypes of the oppressed wife in order to have the migrant husband arrested by the police.

A close textual analysis of these songs of sorrow thus provides deeper insights into and understanding of migrant husbands’ sources of distress, from which we can begin to analyse the roots of the reassertion of masculinity. Whereas, on an individual level, the migrant husband may have experienced distress as a result of changing gender dynamics and, at times, different forms of abuse, securing collective and public acknowledgement of the migrant husbands’ feelings helps establish their plight as a social truth: the truth that their situation does indeed warrant distress, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the truth that the shifting and changing gender dynamics that emerge from marriage and migration are perhaps not warranted.³ The establishment of the plight of migrant husbands as a social truth sets the course for the ways in which they can reassert their masculinity, thereby preventing the transacting of their identities as migrant husbands by various social actors.

Moreover, these videos were probably edited by migrant husband(s), and the music was performed by men who were migrant husbands or their sympathisers. The social position from which these music videos emerge is important to acknowledge. Turner (1992: 10) argues that the Kayapo people of Brazil viewed video documentation as a means of establishing social facts, and Banks (2001) stresses that the power of photography is to legitimise social facts. The role of being a camera operator or video editor also has a social power associated with it (Turner 1992; Banks 2001), and can be employed to establish ‘social truths’. This is particularly salient in the context of the songs of sorrow, as women do not appear to be involved in the lyrical composition of songs or in the video-editing process, and thus their voices are eliminated from this (re)telling of the experiences of migrant husbands. I acknowledge that, although the social truths of the migrant

husbands' plight through songs of sorrow provide a unique way in which to reassert masculinity from a disadvantaged position, we cannot ignore the fact that women are referred to in these songs within a patriarchal social framework. It is important to be aware of this juxtaposition of a multitude of socio-cultural matrixes at play: gender power dynamics, gendered religious expectations and ideals, migration aspirations, masculine ideals, and marriage expectations and realities.

An important recurring theme through the songs of sorrow is religious symbols, which are the focus of the [next chapter](#). Indeed, religious symbols are particularly embedded within the stories and narratives (Riis and Woodhead 2010: 91) of migrant husbands in songs of sorrow. Although perhaps not immediately apparent on first sight and/or when listening to the songs, a 'multivocality' (Banks 2001) is present, which – when read at its deeper levels – demonstrates that the images employed in the videography serve as determined compact symbols (Ortner 1973) that not only communicate emotional dispositions approved by a religious regime – namely conservative Islam – but also become entwined in autobiographies and anchor personal emotional mood, and memories (Hoskins 1998). Obeyeskere's studies (1981: 46) reveal how symbols are appropriated and creatively reinterpreted by individuals, who use them not only to make sense of their own situations but to negotiate complex social relations, and very often to attain some leverage within them, thereby effecting the changes in personal standing and circumstance that would otherwise be impossible (Riis and Woodhead 2010: 68). Similarly, 'multivocal' (Banks 2001) symbols used in the songs of sorrow are creatively employed by migrant husbands to negotiate the complexity of the migrant husband experience, and to attain leverage in the British Pakistani community context. Examples of such multivocal symbols include physical markers of religiosity (such as turbans), which transform into a socio-religious capital that migrant husbands employ in establishing authority. These multivocal symbols are considered in more detail in the following chapter.

Reworking of gender power in marriage

In analysing songs of sorrow, the chapter thus far has highlighted how a large part of the acknowledgement and comfort that songs provide for migrant husbands speaks to the shift in gender power dynamics, and the emotional turmoil that arises as a result. Indeed, we must ask broader questions as to what this means for gendered power in marriages. What implications are there for the way in which we view household dynamics? Should

we be viewing marital relations and household dynamics solely through hegemonic masculinity forms?

There are a number of studies that provide some insight into the impact of changing gender power relations and household structures. For instance, within the Indian household, Wadley (1994: 63) reports that young daughters-in-law are expected to touch the feet of senior women as a way of paying their respects and seeking their permission and counsel in everything they do. The mother-in-law's role can even extend to assigning sleeping places on a nightly basis, giving her immense control over the sexuality of her sons and their wives (Wadley 1994: 60; Mirza 2017). Although there is some research in India that explores women's roles in the household with greater nuance, there is little if any research conducted with south Asian communities in the UK diaspora (Rew, Gangoli, and Gill 2013; Mirza 2017: 394). There are indications in the literature that suggest that south Asian women are not always subjected to abuse by male perpetrators but can also be powerful matriarchs during the later stages of their life cycles (Shaw 2006; Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010: 252; Kumar 2012; Rew, Gangoli, and Gill 2013; Mirza 2017). Age, therefore, can widen the space within which women can transact greater power.

Raheja and Gold (1994) find that women have been performing hidden acts of resistance and subversion through the singing of songs within the patriarchal structure, and there is a wide body of literature that acknowledges this more broadly (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2001; Jaschok 2003; Bano 2012; Obermeyer 1995; Alexander 2013). One of the ways through which women may be able to exercise greater agency is migration (Espiritu 1997: 75; Luu 1989: 68), which has been echoed through studies undertaken with British Pakistanis (Shaw 2006: 336; Charsley 2013; Qureshi 2013: 13). Transmigration has broadened the spaces in which women can assert themselves and transact greater power and autonomy, particularly within marriage (see also Qureshi, Charsley, and Shaw 2014; Mooney 2006). Since the middle of the twentieth century developments in family planning and technological innovations in the home are widely acknowledged to have contributed to the shift in gender roles enabling women access to spaces in which they can assert themselves (Greenwood, Seshadri, and Yorukoglu 2003; Propenoe 1993). Within the broader literature, there is some indication that transnational marriages among South-Asians can cause continual renegotiations of patriarchal relations for both men and women during the immigration and settlement process (Espiritu 1997: 8). As a result, the sense of independence and well-being of both women and men can be subjected to considerable pressure from shifting gender roles, translating into a higher incidence of abuse (Espiritu 1997: 75; Luu 1989: 68).

Since the family has a significant role in shaping and even orchestrating the experiences of the migrant husbands, it is important to consider the implications of the case of migrant husbands for gender dynamics, household structure, and marriage as an institution. In other words, if migrant husbands' weakness is defined in relation to the power exercised by wives and in-laws, we must interrogate the implications entailed for the British Pakistani family, and for wives, who are usually portrayed as victims. The control of men has been found to generate the highest form of honour (see Fischer 1991), which not only disrupts our traditional understandings of honour, as associated with the control of women's bodies, but also contributes to theories of masculinity that have framed masculinities as multiple and complex (see Connell 2005; Donaldson and Howson 2009). We certainly see aspects of this in the second song, in which the father-in-law is seen to raise his hand against the migrant husband, after which the migrant husband escapes to return to his homeland. I now advance this further in order to be able to understand how migrant husband masculinity is shaped and determined in this context, by focusing on the changing nature of gender dynamics, patriarchy, and household structure. This allows for insights into the micro-level processes involved in the construction and transacting of the masculinity of migrant husbands.

Multiple patriarchies

The sociologist Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women' (Giddens 2006: 403–404; Gordon 1996), but also involves men and older women who oppress women and younger men (Joseph 1996). Within this traditional understanding of patriarchy, the masculine and feminine are defined in opposition to one another by assigning provider roles in public spaces to men, while constraining women to nurturing roles confined to private spaces (Brittan 1989; Hoang and Yeoh 2011). Patriarchy, as per this definition, has been observed in most societies (Joseph 1996; Meagher 2011; Hennessey 1993), including Muslim societies common to the Middle East and south Asian countries such as Pakistan, where it is assumed that Islamic doctrine and culture are oppressive towards women (Hopkins 2006: 343; Nagra 2018: 266). Some scholars, however, have argued that patriarchy invokes an essentialist, ahistoric analysis that is insensitive to the range of experiences of women of different cultures, classes, and ethnicities (Barrett 1980; Rowbotham 1981). There has been a growing wave of scholars who have taken a contextual approach, primarily through an intersectional framework (Crenshaw 1991), demonstrating a range of experiences

that men and women from different socio-geographic and historical trajectories can have (Collins 2005; Mahmood 2001). Patriarchy has remained a relatively static concept over time, however, creating a one-dimensional and homogeneous image of men and women in most societies around the world (see also Frias 2010). The case study of migrant husbands in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community can, in my view, provide new insights relevant to the way in which patriarchy is traditionally understood.

Pakistani and Kashmiri society is widely understood to be patriarchal (Al-Maskari et al. 2011), a social norm that has been maintained by their respective diasporas in the United Kingdom (Ballard 1994; Shaw 2000), and evident in the community's settlement practices (Werbner 1990; Shaw 2000; Ballard 1994). Honour killings and forced marriages testify to the intensity of the patriarchy within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community (Kalra 2009: 115; Gill 2009; Werbner 2005; Afshar 1994). As discussed previously, however, ethnographic glimpses point towards a degree of fluidity in patriarchy triggered by the transmigration process – an indication as to the agency of British Pakistani and Kashmiri women in what appears to be a changing society (see also Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010), in which, ultimately, migrant men and masculinities can be transacted.

Songs of sorrow form a unique blend of visual and musical forms, showing that migrant husbands who marry British Pakistani and Kashmiri women came to occupy weak positions, lead precarious lives, and experience heightened levels of vulnerability. Supplemented with the ethnographic interviews with migrant husbands, we have learnt that their weak positions can translate into domestic violence perpetrated against them by wives and/or in-laws. These findings disrupt the traditional understanding of patriarchy, as we come to learn that migrant husbands are not always powerful and do not always (or only) subordinate women, and that there is some public acknowledgement as to the turmoil they experience (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). The interviews and the songs of sorrow alike afford us nuanced insights into the role of age, seniority, and – in some ways – citizenship in constructing direction of power, as it is senior men and women of pioneer generations, and sometimes wives, who can play a role in subjugating migrant husbands. A key outcome of the intersection between these factors is the 'multiple patriarchies' that can occur in different contexts, but also within the same context. The former has been demonstrated through the presentation of the case study of the Pakistani migrant husbands to the United Kingdom. The latter requires further explanation, however.

Migrant husbands become subjected to patriarchy at the hands of their in-laws, particularly their fathers-in-law. In their narratives, however, migrant husbands often indicated that their wives were also being subjected

to patriarchy, as some had been forced into marriage to save the family's honour (see also Joseph 1996). Furthermore, in some cases in which migrant husbands had married a relative, there were indications of obligations that parents felt towards their siblings, thereby reinforcing transnational kin relations through transnational marriage (see also Shaw 2006). Common relationships were characterised by the obligations a man felt towards his sister, or sisters felt towards their brothers, which suggested that current practices of transnational marriages were a manifestation of kin relations forged within a patriarchal society re-evoked by diasporic memory, for instance. Migrant husbands were often married to the children of their parents' siblings who had migrated to and settled in the United Kingdom. In some cases, when migrant husbands were married to their father's brother's daughter or mother's brother's daughter, wives of their parents' brother were unhappy due to the forging of their children's marriage alliance within the patrilineage. Some interlocutors told me they felt their mothers-in-laws were sabotaging their marriages as a result. There were also cases of migrant husbands who experienced difficulty in obtaining passage to England due to ongoing family feuds between parents of spouses. In this way, multiple and multi-sited patriarchies constantly unfold simultaneously, alongside the unfolding of migrant husbands' social lives.

Home and household structure

The migrant husband's taking up of matrilocal residency (see Turner 1979) after marriage and upon migration to the United Kingdom demonstrates an unconventional family arrangement for the norms of both British society and British Pakistani society, from which we can interrogate the notion of 'home'. For this notion in particular, the migrant husband's experience of matrilocal residence helps us reconceptualise home as fluid. It is common in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community for the parents and extended family to help a newly married couple by providing them accommodation in the form of an extended family household residency arrangement, and/or providing them with a property (albeit in virilocal marriage) that is usually in close proximity to the parents' household – a familial hub over the course of married life and life stages. The joining of the migrant husband to the household in matrilocal form is indicative of the home serving the community not as a destination for its cultural practices but as a vehicle for the in-laws to achieve broader goals that transcend the confines of the home (see Turner 1979), such as additional income, and controlling land in Pakistan or Kashmir.

Second, in both the Pakistani and Kashmiri community and mainstream British society, there are particular notions of home and family, wherein

the husband and/or father is the main breadwinner (Davidoff and Hall 1987: 229; Collier 1995). As I have demonstrated in the [previous chapter](#), however, not only is the migrant husband physically, verbally, and mentally abused but he can also be denied fatherhood and breadwinner status. As a result, I argue that we can begin to reconceptualise home as detached and independent of gender roles and ascriptions. Moreover, since some women (including wives and mothers-in-law) also perpetrated violence towards migrant husbands, the ‘private’ sphere of the home can serve to conceal such behaviour performed by women, and therefore maintain the often one-dimensional grand narrative that women – especially in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri and/or Muslim community – are oppressed (see also Hopkins 2006: 343; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010: 261). Certainly, although this can be the case in many lived social realities, we must acknowledge that there can be an array of subjugations that play out in the transnational household.

In addition, the home has been viewed as a place that has been inscribed into social imaginations and socio-cultural codes of practice as a ‘safe’ place, a site of security (Capers 2011), a place liberated from fear and anxiety, and a place supposedly untouched by political and natural processes (Kaika 2004; Brickell 2011). Within the literature, the home has been illustrated as a turbulent sea of constant negotiation rather than simply some haven for the self (Miller 2001: 4), which is evident through the function of the home as a place that enables abuse of many forms perpetrated by cohabitants (husbands, wives, and in-laws), thereby acquiring the properties of both refuge and prison (Kaika 2004). The social and gender inequalities, power relations, and violence that were meant to be kept outside the modern home are (re)produced within the ideological prison (Millett 1977) of this private space (Brickell 2011) of the home. For the migrant husband, then, this space of the home, which was viewed as a safe haven prior to marriage and migration, becomes a place in which migrant husbands struggle to achieve respect, masculine identity, rights, and citizenship.

Third, since the British government stipulates a number of conditions as part of the migration process and successful application for the indefinite leave to remain, one of which is remaining with the wife for a minimum duration of two years in the United Kingdom, the home becomes a site for the struggle of citizenship – a concept vital for public life, which for the migrant husband is located in the private sphere. Due to this struggle for citizenship, the migrant husband is more vulnerable to experiencing domestic violence, as I showed earlier. The broader political contours of power on a national state level flowing through the home in the form of immigration laws are evidence of some of the most intricate invasions (Bhabha 1994: 3; Brickell 2011: 5), underlining the notion that hegemonic

masculinity (Connell 2005) may be better understood as exhibited by states and/or governments. This helps us to reconceptualise home and the household as permeable and porous (see also Kaika 2004: 273). Further, the violence occurring within the home has introduced the emergence of the policing of families (Donzelot 1980). What happens between a husband and wife within the space of the home is not purely a private matter but also a matter for the state, which suggests that the boundary between the public and private is permeable (Capers 2011: 980). Taking this analysis a step further, songs of sorrow show that the private relations of a husband and wife within the household can also become a source of social media entertainment, and knowledge production. The policing and surveillance of violence in this way (Capers 2011: 989) causes the home to be imbued with public sphere characteristics – an arena in which the public sphere stages the play of citizenship, morality, and law by controlling intimate relationships. Many migrant husbands told me of incidences when the police had entered their homes and arrested them despite their pleading that they had not abused their wives; the police would ‘side with’ the wives, however, who had, my interlocutors stressed, wrongly claimed being victims of abuse to further control their husbands, and ‘teach them a lesson’, as Asif told me. The permeability, the porosity, and the opening up of the home as a site of struggle in many aspects is a blurring of spaces (Milligan 2000: 54), as a result of which the application of liminality theory (Turner 1967) can be applied, but not in the way it was originally proposed, as the liminality of space(s) extends beyond a ‘state’. It is within this liminal space of the household that migrant husbands experience liminal masculinity, and, since space and body are intertwined (Borden 2001: 11), the migrant husband, I argue, becomes liminal himself.

Gender dynamics

Honour and shame have been defined as the need to guard female sexuality (Werbner 2005). Present in often extreme forms in Muslim societies, Muslim women are expected to veil before *ghair mahram* (strange/not-kin men with whom marriage is permissible). Pakistani women have been known to wear light chiffon scarves or *chadors* (a heavy shawl), draped around the head and the upper part of the body (Khan 1976; Werbner 2005), which are a symbol of modesty, and thus an aid in the maintenance of honour and shame. This way of veiling is more characteristic of the pioneer generation of Pakistani and Kashmiri women, however, as younger generations of British Pakistani and Kashmiri women have increasingly donned the hijab, which is firmly pinned to the head and (usually) does not show any hair. This form of veiling is no longer seen as part of an ethnic identity but, rather, as part of a

global Muslim identity.⁴ Veiling has broadly been considered to be a symbol of the protection of women's chastity (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2005; Werbner 2005). Scholars have reported, however, that the Pakistani community holds conservative views towards female dress and behaviour, which are inextricably linked to concepts of honour and shame (Afshar 1994; Kassam 1997), dubbed as 'policing women'. In their extreme forms, such views can translate into so-called honour-based violence in the form of forced marriages (Kalra 2009: 115) and honour-based murders (Gill 2009). Honour and shame are, therefore, excessively associated with the control of women's bodies in the United Kingdom – or, at least, this has been the conventional scholarly position since ethnic communities have been studied.

Honour and shame in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community are also deeply embedded in the politics of marriage and the (extended) family (*biraaderi*), as well as in the politics of the community (Werbner 2005; Shaw 2000). Reputation and loss of face have been shown to be important factors for the parental generation when considering marriage proposals for their sons and daughters (Shaw 2000, 2006; Charsley and Shaw 2006; Werbner 2005), and, as a result, transnational marriages continue to be seen as desirable options to maintain, and also increase, familial honour among the wider community and kin network (Charsley and Shaw 2006). A daughter married with honour is seen as the primary means for her father to increase his honour (Fischer 1991: 104), reinforcing the narrative that women are seen as exchange material at the disposal of men. Fischer's contention that the 'highest form' of honour is the control of men has not featured to date, however, in the debates and discussions of honour and shame within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community.

The way in which the migrant husband is subjected to extreme forms of control and even domestic violence, often by pioneer migrants, demonstrates that the control of men generates the highest form of honour. In particular, it is the older generation of transnational patriarchs that benefit from the control of the migrant husband, as he is able to withhold family wealth in the form of land in Pakistan and Kashmir. This communicates, to the wider kinship network in the homeland and in Britain, that the pioneer-generation transnational patriarch withholds another family's breadwinner. The symbolism of controlling another family's breadwinner, heir, is a sign of wealth, strength, respect, and honour. Therefore, the traditional notion of honour and shame as associated with women's bodies is ruptured through the case of the migrant husband, as we see that honour and shame, in their highest form, are associated with the male body. This also widens the ways in which we can understand Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera's (2010: 261) contention that Pakistani Muslim women are not always victims of oppression. It is important to note that the ability to transact migrant husbands

is interconnected with the British state, by way of granting citizenship to senior migrant husbands who become fathers-in-law, and upon which the securing of further citizenship is relied on through the act of the giving of British daughters, in transnational marriage.

The case study of the migrant husband demonstrates that, contrary to conventional understandings, the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community is not strictly patriarchal, in that all women are at the mercy of all men in the community, but, rather, that there are 'multiple patriarchies', in which men and women of different ages and socio-cultural capitals experience, exercise, and engage in differently. In other words, experiences within the community are not defined along one-dimensional gender lines. Second, although the household and the home are usually seen as the women's domain, in which household chores, cooking, raising children, and domestic abuse can occur, the case of the migrant husband shows that both migrant husbands and their fathers-in-law engage in cooking and cleaning, and women can also perpetrate abuse in this sphere. In this way, then, there is greater fluidity and dynamism in men's and women's performances in the private sphere within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri community.

As part of the broader spectrum of inverse gender performances, the fieldwork demonstrated glimpses of increased choice exercised by women. For instance, Sarish, who was betrothed to migrant husband Armaan, refused to marry him, which meant that Armaan and his family's aspirations were truncated, as a result of which their aspirations experienced severe revision, as Armaan's family sought another marriage proposal from Britain for him. Migrant husband narratives, such as those from Rehan and Arshad, also detailed wives' demands for oral sex, which, while causing considerable personal and marital stress and internal conflict of moral and religious values for migrant husbands, indicates a marked shift in our understandings of the sexual attitudes and preferences of British Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim women. Furthermore, we learn that Asad's wife was able to file an Islamic divorce independently of her family's wishes and support. Not all migrant husbands experienced abuse by their wives; some experienced love, support, and companionship in their marriages. For instance, Asif shared that his wife supported him when her parents abused him and helped him realise his dream of opening his own barber shop. Asif's wife then supported her husband against the wishes of her parents, who were keen for the newlywed couple to remain under their control.

Together, these cases demonstrate a widening of the agency that women can exercise within marriage, and particularly in an upward power direction relating to pioneer generations. Transnational uxorilocal marriages can also endow women with greater autonomy and power, suggesting that there is a reworking of gender power in marriage as a result of migration. For theories

of masculinity (Connell 2005), this reworking of gender power in marriage demonstrates that masculinities are diverse, multiple, and complex, and are not only challenged by competing masculinities, such as that of senior men who have greater authority and power, but can also be up against increasing female autonomy. More specifically, the migration process in this particular context causes the interaction of intersecting social factors such as greater female authority, age, and generational differences, which create a unique space in which migrant husbands struggle to define and, by extension, achieve their aspired masculinity.

This chapter has also traced the intimate ways in which marriage and masculinity are interconnected in and through migration. Put differently, movement through migration impacts gender relations and gender performativity. I contend that gender is not performed, as Judith Butler (1990) puts it, as this denotes agency. Rather, gender is performed *on*, through power and control. Butler's concept of performativity is a remote dream for migrant husbands, as they carve out spaces of resistance and agency to become closer to their desired position, from where they can then perform in their gender. The chapter has shown, however, that the position from where gender can be performed is not always achieved, as the changes brought about through migration have lasting impacts.

Notes

- 1 At the time of publication, the YouTube video was available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EilujGczoiI.
- 2 At the time of publication, the YouTube video was available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HjOjCY8xjQ&t=0s&list=PLJzvGS5k1jBUhb5_MCy0xpeiGT1kr4LdL&index=4.
- 3 From my personal position as a feminist, researcher, and British Muslim woman with Pakistani/Kashmiri heritage, some of the references to women in these songs of sorrow are unsettling for me.
- 4 There are many different ways in which the hijab is now worn by British Muslim women (of all ethnicities), including draped, pinned back, turban style, etc. In my view, the hijab is no longer part of an 'ethnic' identity among British Pakistani women but has been incorporated as part of the 'global' Muslim identity.

Spiritual masculinity: Sufi-scapes, *sabr*, and religio-social capital

Introduction

The world's major religions and spiritual traditions are seldom homogeneous in their compilation of followers, and Islam is no exception (Faghfoory 2014; Ramadan 2017). When we consider sectarian divisions within Islam, we often think of the Sunni and Shia branches. Tariq Ramadan, a Muslim academic, philosopher, and writer, and author of *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (2003), provides a more detailed breakdown by using a five-point model, through which he defines the different tendencies in the thought, discourses, and engagement of Muslims around the world. The categories are as follows. First there is *scholastic traditionalism*, which is adhered to by Muslim communities in many parts of the world including the United States and the United Kingdom. It involves relying on both the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the life of the Prophet Muhammad), and scholarly opinions to guide their practice of Islam as Muslims. Sunni branches such as the Deobandi and Barelvi traditions, including the four schools of thought (Hannafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Sha'fi'), fall within this category. Then there is *Salafi literalism*, which involves a rejection of scholarly interpretation of texts. Adherents refer to themselves as Salafs, symbolising their identification with the original companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who were known as the Salafs, and they interpret the Qur'an and Sunnah in a direct and literal way. Third is *political literalist Salafism*, described as having been born out of repression in the Muslim world, and joining up literalist interpretations of Islamic texts with a call for social political action (see also Hamid 2016). Muslims under this strand of Islam believe in establishing an Islamic state and caliphate through jihad, and receive the majority of public attention in the West. *Liberal* or *rationalist reformist* approaches consider Islam from a spiritual dimension rather than a practising one, which is demonstrated through their assimilation into Western society, which will involve bearing minimalist outward signs through clothing or physical markers of

identity to demonstrate their Muslim identity. Muslims within this sphere support the complete separation of religion from public life.

Finally, *Sufism* is an Islamic tradition oriented towards spirituality and mysticism, and promotes closeness to God through *zikr*, a form of Islamic meditation in which phrases or prayers are repeatedly chanted, and understanding texts through Sufi teachings. Different Sufi orders prescribe a specific *zikr*, which is often accompanied by specific postures, breathing styles, and movements. Followers often decide to take *bayah* (initiation) with a particular Sufi order, of which there are many across the Islamic world, all of which have branches in the United Kingdom. Examples include the Naqshbandi, Shadhili, and Chishtiyya Sufi orders, each of which has a head shaykh who leads the order. Whereas the latter orders arose in parts of the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, and have migrated to the West through increased technological and social media influence, more recent trends in Sufism have included Western-born hubs of Islamic education and spiritual engagement (see also Hamid 2016). Shaykh Hamza Yusuf's Zaytuna College in California is a prime example of a Western Sufi-oriented institution, founded by a convert to Islam. A parallel approach has been adopted by Shaykh Abdul Hakim Murad, also a convert to Islam and professor of religion and theology at Cambridge University. Hakim founded the Cambridge Muslim College, where leadership education together with Islamic education are offered for young British Muslims. A more recent example is the Yaqeen Institute in Texas, which was founded by Shaykh Omar Suleiman, a Muslim American with Palestinian roots, which further underlines the hunger for modern Muslim leadership within diaspora communities in the West. Many of these shaykhs have risen to prominence via social media, particularly by providing online lectures and teachings, and publishing materials. Gen Z and Millennial Muslims have been attracted to such teachers and engagement platforms, partially due to work and education commitments, as a result of which young Muslims are unable to commit to formal Islamic education, which requires a significant commitment. This is coupled with the cultural leanings of Islamic practices by pioneer generations of migrant parents, especially those who migrated from Indo-Pakistani regions to Britain during the period after the Second World War (Ballard 1994). It was common, for example, for British Pakistani and Kashmiri children to attend after school mosque classes for an hour or two, during the weekdays.

Many of these teachers offer tailored guidance into dealing with issues young Muslims face in the West today. Yasmin Mogahed, a prominent female Muslim speaker, also rose to popularity among young Muslims in the West through her online lectures and social media presence. Her popularity soared on the publication of her book *Reclaim Your Heart*

(Mogahed 2012), which addresses heartbreak in the modern world. Much of my own engagement with Islam and religious teachings has been rooted in such neo-Sufi teachers and shaykhs, who have broken down the complex and often overwhelming teachings of Islam into accessible and consumable compartments. Dr Yasir Qadhi's books *Lessons from Sūrah Yūsuf* (Qadhi 2021) and *Lessons from Sūrah al-Kahf* (Qadhi 2020) are some of my favourite reads, and have illuminated and shaped my relationship with the Qur'an in recent years. Dr Qadhi's approach involves both translating and explaining the meaning and significance of each verse, which brings the Qur'an to life. Given my professional commitments and constraints on my time, I value the way in which these books are concise, travel-friendly, and perfect for bedtime reading. As I am a practising Muslimah, these texts have enabled me to strengthen in my religious knowledge, and therefore feel an enriching of my connection with God. This is ever more important for me in an era of social media and technological revolution, when it is becoming increasingly easy to fall into the rabbit hole of screen time and endless scrolling. Such texts have therefore enabled me to nourish my soul not only from a religious perspective, but also from a work-life balance and social media detox perspective. With the turning of every page, I constantly experience sparks flying in my mind and the feeling of my heart being positively full.

The Sufi and neo-Sufi teachings of Islam are popular in the United Kingdom, with many of the aforementioned speakers, such as Yasmin Mogahed, regularly visiting to speak to audiences. The city of Birmingham is home to branches of a number of Sufi orders, as many of the youth within the city's Muslim community – many of whom belong to the British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities – have developed an appetite for purist forms of Islamic teachings that are divorced from the Pakistani and Kashmiri cultures. Such sentiments have risen from greater Saudi influence among British Muslims, particularly through the Wahhabi movement, which advocates a literalist interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Many of the Sufi orders and their religious congregations in *zawiyas* remain largely unexplored within academic discourses, and the engagement of incoming migrants with these Sufi orders has also yet to receive academic enquiry. It is on this rich backdrop, born out of the intersection of Islamic traditions, migration, social media and technological advances, generational differences in religious and cultural practice, and resistance narratives, that the current chapter rests, and upon which migrant husband experiences are mapped. I particularly question whether, in the face of increased vulnerability and precarity upon marriage migration to the United Kingdom, Sufi orders play a role in migrant husband masculine (re)construction, and practices of resistance. Further, I question how the

techniques employed in *becoming* a migrant husband prior to marriage migration fare against the techniques used in *remaining* a migrant husband upon marriage migration.

Transnational Sufi practices

Approximately three-quarters of the migrant husband cohort who participated in the research were engaged to some degree in Indo-Pak Sufi Islam, which typically involves *pirs* (Sufi holy men or leaders), *darbaars* (shrines), and talismans offered by *pirs* (see also Marsden 2005; Grewal 2014). As Mohammed Arkoun, an Algerian scholar and thinker, puts it, Sufism is Islam's 'mystic strain', the 'ultimate purpose' of which is the 'unifying encounter between the believer and his or her personal God' (Arkoun 1994: 81), in which 'shrine-centred worship' and affiliation with Sufi 'brotherhoods' (*tariqas*) and 'lodges' (*zawiyas*) (Archer 2003: 49; Marsden 2005; Grewal 2014) are central. References to *pirs* and shrines were made in some of the songs of sorrow in the [previous chapter](#), to whom families would seek guidance regarding a successful visa application to the United Kingdom, among other social causes, such as fertility issues, family rivalry and feuds, and illnesses. In south Asia, Sufi-oriented Islamic traditions have experienced severe criticism from Muslim reformers for the past two centuries. Muslim 'purists' have labeled Sufi Islam 'illegal' and as having been derived from Hinduism; as a result, it has been argued to be a distortion of the 'correct' form of Islamic doctrine and practice, which is seen to be based entirely on the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) (Marsden 2005). Any practice outside the parameters of the Qur'an and Hadith is deemed to be *bid'ah* (innovation), alien in and to the religion (Birt 2005; Ramadan 2003). Nonetheless, Sufi Islam thrives in Pakistan, and other areas of south Asia and the world (Ewing 1983; Hoffman 1995; Subhan 1999; Howell 2001; Marsden 2005; Cornell 2010). Not only have a considerable proportion of the Pakistani and Kashmiri communities in Britain been Sufi followers for a number of generations, but they have also established mosques and sought tolerance for their religious identity, beliefs, and practices in Britain (Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994).

Migrant husbands who took part in my research often talked about their religious practices prior to marriage migration, particularly in relation to saints who lived many generations prior to them in different parts of Pakistan and Kashmir (see also Keddie 1972). Upon marriage migration, remembrance of these saints continued, but was also complemented with the introduction of local scholars, teachers, and religious leaders within the Birmingham *Sufi-scape*. Here, I borrow from Arjun Appadurai's five scapes of globalisation (1990) to define the religious

landscape in Birmingham as a ‘Sufi-scape’, since it is home to a diverse range of neo-Sufi religious hubs.

In 2018 some 301,000 Muslims were recorded to be living in Birmingham, making up 27 per cent of the overall population. To accommodate this large community there are over 167 mosques in the city, the majority of which are Sunni-Muslim inclined. Since 2010 a recent addition to the city’s religious landscape has been the rise of Sufi *zawiyas* and *halaqas* (religious gatherings) (see also Grewal 2014). This has in large part been influenced by a number of international religious leaders, such as Shaykh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi, a Syrian Islamic scholar and direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, and the leader of the Shadhili *tareeqa* (a Sufi religious order or group) (Shikhaliev 2009). Technological advancements and social media have enabled Islamic shaykhs to reach a global audience, gaining greater numbers of followers in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America. Shaykh Muhammad has visited the Ghamkol Sharif Mosque in Small Heath, Birmingham, a number of times, garnering audiences in their tens of thousands. Some Muslim migrant husbands who participated in my research spoke in great detail about their engagement with Sufi brotherhoods such as the Shadhili *tareeqa*, as a result of which I was able to start mapping the broader Sufi-scape of Birmingham (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).¹

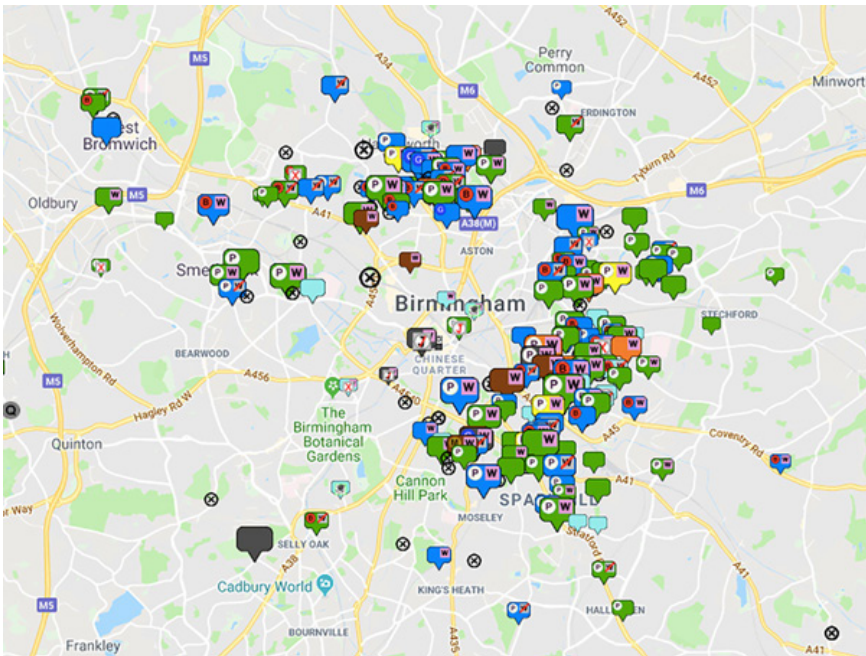


Figure 4.1 A Google map indicating the number of mosques in Birmingham. Map data © Google.

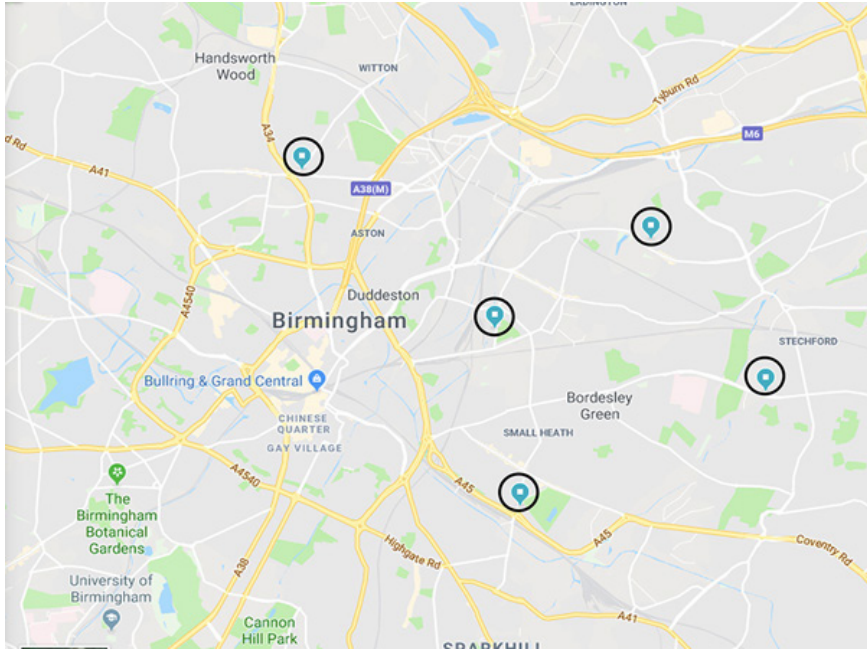


Figure 4.2 A map of Birmingham indicating the Sufi brotherhoods that migrant husbands engaged with, in location spots with black rings around.
Map data © Google.

Other *tareeqas* in the city include the Naqshbandi *tareeqa*, which was at the time of my PhD led by Shaykh Nazim Al-Haqqani, who has since passed away. The order has now been taken over by his son-in-law, Shaykh Muhammad, who regularly visited the United Kingdom during my research. Each Sufi brotherhood had a unique colour that dominates its attire, setting it apart from other Sufi brotherhoods. From the position of an observer-academic within the community who is also of the opposite gender, however, I am persuaded to believe that both the bold use of colour and unique clothing items such as turbans and scarves indicate that there is a uniform or dress code, which is an important avenue through which membership of the brotherhood is negotiated, achieved, and communicated. For example, members of Faizan-e-Madina, a Sunni Islamic organisation founded in 1980 by Dawat-e-Islami and based in Pakistan, don green turbans and white robes, whereas the followers of Jamiah Mohy-ul-Islam Siddiquia, founded by the Pir Siddiqui, don white hats that are laced with a thin green strip. The colour green is cited by both Sufi brotherhoods as being associated with the Prophet Muhammad, thereby justifying its incorporation in

their dress code. On the other hand, followers of Kanzul-Huda, founded and led by Pir Saqib Shaami around 2010, and rooted in the Chishtiyya Sufi movement in modern-day India, wear orange scarves around the necks to signify their membership. The varying colours and clothing items are worn by some *mureeds* (disciples or followers) on a daily basis, while others wear them only when attending religious gatherings and events that take place weekly, which further indicates their status as a form of uniform. They also serve to set *mureeds* in different Sufi groups apart, and no doubt help them identify their almost ‘religious kinsmen’ within their Sufi order, from that of other Sufi orders in the city, and across the world.

In addition to these Sufi orders, additional groups included the *zawiya* in the Ward End area of Birmingham that hosted both the Naqshbandiyyah (Weismann 2007) and Shadhili (Shikhaliev 2009) *tareeqas*, and Ghamkol Sharif Mosque, which hosted mainly joint events between the many Sufi brotherhoods in Birmingham. I also learnt that these spaces were not restricted to men, as women had their own gatherings: *mawlid*s (celebrations of Prophet Muhammad’s birth), *tajweed* (term for the pronunciation of Qur’anic Arabic) lessons, and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) lessons. As the research focus of this book is the masculinity of migrant husbands, women feature either as the patients of the spiritual healers or the wives of migrant husbands. I ought to point out, however, that there has in the past five years (at the time of writing this book) been a rapid increase in female Islamic scholarship (see also Grewal 2014) within Birmingham, with a number of *ustadhas* (female Muslim scholars) pioneering the way forwards. More broadly, *mawlid*s have long been celebrated by some Muslim women in Birmingham, and female religious engagement and experience are seen to be acceptable and encouraged within the community. Migrant husbands who participated in these Sufi orders became heavily invested, a handful even going as far as donating a proportion of their monthly salaries to the operation of the Sufi orders, their gatherings, and to host the visits of the shaykhs. Across transnational planes, then, marriage migration introduced migrant husbands to new forms of Sufi practices.

Spiritual masculinity

A common theme that surfaced during my life history interviews with migrant husbands was the experience of religion as a way to reassert masculinity (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 121–122). Migrant husbands believed that they suffered emasculation as a result of precarity and vulnerability upon marriage migration, which departed from their aspirations for transnational patriarch identity. As a result, they were plunged into liminal masculinity, an in-between masculinity that could extend beyond

the temporal to embodied experiences over longer periods of time. Among the different ways that religion was experienced, imagined, and reimagined, stories of hardships experienced by prophets² and saints – both past and present – featured heavily as techniques to reassert masculinity, as they provided an alternative masculine currency to that of the transnational patriarch.

After many years of abuse from his father-in-law and in a marriage rife with tensions, Imran had separated from his wife three years prior to our interview, and had found permanent employment at a Pakistani confectionary and sweet store. Imran, and other migrant husbands in similar situations to his, dealt with their personal turmoil by constructing a space in which they found refuge in and practised spirituality. This allowed them to become closer to God, draw on a well of inner strength, and – in Imran's words – 'not fall into the traps of the *dunya* [world]'. The construction of this spiritual space grew around practices of remembrance of prophets such as Muhammad, Musa (Moses), and Yusuf (Joseph), and Sufi saints such as Miah Muhammad Baksh, who lived in northern Pakistan in the early nineteenth century, and was known as a religious leader and poet in the region. Such learning and remembrance resonated with migrant husbands on an intimate level, prompting them to draw connections with their own hardships, trials, and tribulations, ultimately resulting in a feeling of closeness with God. These private and largely imagined spaces became a way for migrant husbands to weather the precarious and vulnerable circumstances they often found themselves in through their personal marriage migration journeys.

One of my interlocutors, Nasar, who was 32 years old at the time, talked about the role of the Sufi poetry of one particular saint, Miah Muhammad Baksh:

When you feel pain you feel unspoken things ... Miah Muhammad Baksh understands pain and suffering and the way of the world. These people [Sufi saints] knew that the world is full of betrayal and disappointment. One of the things he says is: 'If you do good to pious men they will never forget for generations. If you do good to mean people, they will return it by injuring your feelings.'

Nasar also talked about drawing strength from other prominent figures in Islam:

Imam Ali's life example and sayings have made me stronger ... The Prophet Yusuf's story provides me strength and comfort. First his brothers sold him off and then he was then sold into slavery; he was also imprisoned for many years. These stories give me strength and teach me patience ... They are a perfect example of what it means to be a man ... [T]he best men are those that walk in the footsteps of the Prophets ...

Ahmed also spoke about the trials of the Prophet Muhammad, which he constantly remembered:

We know from reading about the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that he experienced so many trials – he had children who died, he had people who wanted to murder him, people who would throw stones at him when he walked past their house – and he would not utter a word. The life of our Prophet is an example for us. I remember his trials when my mother-in-law swears at me and when she fills my wife's ears with hate for me, when she causes me and my wife to argue; it helps me stay patient and remember that Allah [God] is with me.

Faris told me about the historical hardship faced by men who migrated in the past and how the trials they encountered helped him deal with his own struggles:

We often forget about the men hundreds of years before us who migrated on foot to different countries. The great migration that Musa [Moses] *alay hi slaam* [form of respect after mentioning a prophet's name] took with his people, when he had enemies chasing him. Allah split the sea for him and his people to pass safely and escape the enemies. If Allah can do that for Musa, Allah is with us too. Sallahudin also took a great migration for the Muslims world. Migration for a bigger cause is never easy, but Allah makes it easy.

It was evident that Imran, Nasar, Ahmed, Faris, and other migrant husbands in similar situations drew on the historic and documented experiences of Muslim men to stand strong in the face of their own hardships experienced within multiple, and intersecting, patriarchal structures (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). This use of historical narrations detailing the life trajectories of prominent figures in Islamic history to construct a current space of agency in a transnational, diaspora context is unique to migrant husbands, at least as far as academic enquiry extends.³ Some migrant husbands who found themselves in difficult positions told me that they transcended these complex social barriers through spiritual practice. In some of their accounts, it transpired that this sense of solidarity and spirituality, through the remembrance of key Muslim male figures and the trials they faced, provided an arena in which they could experience an internal feeling of *sukoon* (peace), and through which they could experience a momentary break from their day-to-day anxieties. In this way, then, spiritual masculinity comprises an important part of the masculine ideal that migrant husbands aspired to during such difficult periods. At the same time, the remembrance of these life histories of men in Islam was telling of the 'hope' that migrant husbands possessed and cherished, that they would soon see better days and, at the very least, be recognised in the eyes of God as a reward, both of which became a technique used to

reassert their masculinity internally, within themselves. This strikes a chord with the practices of *sabr* (patience) exercised by Pakistani women, who believed their silent sufferings would earn them greater reward from God (Qureshi 2013). The concept of *sawaab* (good deeds, or reward) formed a peg around which spaces of resistance and agency were constructed within the spiritual realm, wherein migrant husbands could, to various degrees, transact their own experiences, identities, and, ultimately, masculinities.

The current Islamic context of Birmingham serves as a resource and a tool for some migrant husbands to reassert their masculinity, which they perceive as being broken or bruised. Around 16 Muslim migrant husbands told me they took *bayah* (religious membership) (see Grewal 2014) with Sunni Islamic brotherhoods in Birmingham. For instance, Asif shared his experience of taking *bayah* with Pir Siddiqui, leader of Noor TV, a satellite channel with its headquarters in Aston, Birmingham, that is viewed by Muslims across the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. Asif told me that the group's TV channel would be viewed by both his wife's family and extended family relatives, which exposed him to participating in collective forms of prayer such as *zikr* and *wird* (supplications) that he subsequently wanted to take part in. He therefore took the decision to take *bayah* with the *pir* of the group in 2010. Upon being asked how he had felt taking *bayah*, Asif said: 'I was happy. I had something other than my wife's family. A group of men that I could be friends with but also remember Allah ... I felt supported and I felt safe.'

Similarly, Zaid took *bayah* with the Dawat-e-Islami [literal translation: Invitation to Islam] group, which has a mosque in Birmingham called Faizan-e-Madina. Dawat-e-Islami is a Sunni Islamic organisation based in Pakistan and founded in the 1980s. The group also has a satellite TV channel, called Madani Channel, which is viewed by Muslims in the United Kingdom and across Europe and the Indian subcontinent. Their teachings promote love of the Prophet Muhammad as the final prophet of Islam. They believe that the Prophet Muhammad can intercede for Muslims in the presence of God, as a result of which they emphasise the practice of *Milaad*, a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Gatherings at which *zikr* supplications are chanted, collective storytelling of multiple Prophets' struggles and teachings, and lectures on Islamic law are offered. Usually the group records these (often live) and streams them on its TV channel. My interlocutor, Zaid, a 36-year-old migrant husband who worked in a local supermarket after arriving in the United Kingdom in 2014, told me:

We would read *namaaz* [prayer] in Pakistan five times a day at the village mosque, but here people do not read their prayers; they don't care as much. I would go to the Madani channel mosque [Faizan-e-Madina] ... They gave Friday sermons in Urdu, which was heartwarming. I found a family outside of

my wife's family who supported me ... [T]hese people spoke my language and shared the values and beliefs I was brought up with.

When asked to elaborate on shared values and beliefs, Zaid told me that these included a common understanding that men were breadwinners and providers for their families. He also told me, however, that many of his peers acknowledged that times had moved on, and that in the United Kingdom there is greater equality between the sexes, including women becoming employed. Notwithstanding this, Zaid and his peers believed that women were primary caregivers for children and ought to be good mothers and wives. Many of the sermons also referred to such gendered division of roles. Zaid's interview indicates that the Sufi tradition he is affiliated with is patriarchal, which complements the male-centric structure of Sufi traditions that can pride themselves on the male lineage of shaykhs, which trace back to the Prophet Muhammad. I must add a caveat here; during my fieldwork I learnt that smaller circles and branches of women's gatherings for each Sufi tradition also existed in Birmingham. The women's gathering are less active, however, and are not as well known in comparison to the men's branches. A key reason for this was that men's branches were incorporated in the mosque's structure and/or used the mosque or *zawiya* to host their weekly gatherings.

Zaid also explained that his affiliation with the Sufi group earned him respect (see also Redclift and Rajina 2017: 408; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130) among his wife's family, as it was suggestive of his loyalty towards his wife.

The British-born Pakistani men don't go to the mosque usually, but the fact that I do and I'm from Pakistan means that I'm more valuable to them [in-laws] than their British sons ... I give them more honour ... I think I would have been respected less and treated worse if I was not religious like this ...

His interview demonstrated to me that religiosity was a source of socio-cultural capital (Bourdieu 2011; Kalra 2009; Bi 2019) employed by migrant husbands in a strategic way to navigate the complex transnational social context they had become entangled in upon marriage migration. Spiritual masculinity became an alternative socio-religious currency, which competes with the social currencies demonstrated and exhibited by hegemonic masculinities, such as that of fathers-in-law, the pioneer generation of migrants, and that of the transnational patriarch. Through this socio-religious currency, some migrant husbands were able to gain a degree of transacting powers over their lives as migrant husbands, and, ultimately, their masculine identities.

Migrant husbands spoke fondly of the uniforms they wore as part of their Sufi *tareeqas*, as it helped them feel they belonged somewhere, especially as

they often experienced negativity and bad treatment at the hands of their wives and in-laws and had limited support networks. The various forms of external markers that indicated affiliation with certain Sufi brotherhoods resonated with the making of the migrant husband in the home country, through altering external appearances by way of haircuts, apparel, sunglasses, and jewellery to resemble British-born Pakistani men. The experiencing of hardships upon marriage and migration meant that the techniques employed in *becoming* a migrant husband were no longer relevant in *remaining* a migrant husband.

Yassir told me:

Coming from Pakistan is not easy. It's a new country – new way of doing things here. It seems that our *apne* [own kin] have also forgotten their ways. They only care about what someone is going to give them and how they can be of use to them. I found peace and solace when I found Pir Siddiqi and his followers ... [W]e all wear the same hat, we are one, we are unified – and this also gives me peace, because everything else in my life is shattered.

The Sufi brotherhoods in Birmingham were a space in which migrant husbands could experience belonging, community, and oneness (see also Archer 2003: 49), outside the family units they had joined upon marriage migration, and in the country that they had long envisaged settling in. Haider explained that he had taken *bayah* with the Chishti group in Birmingham, who don orange scarves as their distinct uniform. The colour orange signifies south Asian and Indian heritage, as the Chishtiyya Sufi tradition is rooted there. Given that orange is the colour of the Sikh flag and is also incorporated in the Indian flag, one could consider this as being a reason for an Islamic group to *not* claim this as part of their identity-making practices. I believe this in itself indicates how strongly each Sufi group desires to differentiate itself from other groups within Birmingham, transacting a unique religio-social identity. It also indicates in some ways the continuation of the politics of the Indian subcontinent since Partition, in terms of the human, cultural, and religious geographies of the British Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora communities.

Haider told me:

Having a *pir* gave me guidance not only religiously and spiritually but also in terms of the difficult times I experience. When they talk about what it means to be a husband and father according to Islam, it is captivating, it is like a medicine ... I have also spoken to my *pir*, who has given me good advice for my marriage problems ... I know I must keep patience and faith and things will get better.

Haider's narrative indicates that he was experiencing a growing sense of peace and support, demonstrating to me the importance of these brotherhoods for self-esteem, positive mental health, belonging, and identity.

Shafiq told me about a holy man he had visited during a time of great distress in his marriage:

When my wife wanted to divorce me, one of my friends advised me to visit a holy man in Birmingham. I went to him and told him the situation. He gave me some *wazifas* [prayer supplications] to read every day to solve my problem. He also gave me some talismans to burn every two days in the evenings for two months ... He also looked in ink and found out if someone had done black magic on us [the couple] ... He said that people had done black magic on me and my wife so that we divorce. He told me that he saw in the ink my mother-in-law brainwashing my wife and wanting to destroy our marriage. A week after following his instructions, my wife no longer wanted a divorce and things improved. She [wife] then said she wanted to move out of her parents' house and get a separate house ... [W]e are currently renting.

Shafiq attributed the progress in his marriage to the help provided to him by the holy man he had visited. Shafiq showed me an image of the talismans, which he continues to burn. He told me the holy man instructed him to light the talisman at the pointed tip, and to circulate it in anti-clockwise motions. Magnus Marsden (2005) also found the use of talismans being offered to patients by spiritual healers in Pashtun communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which indicates that such practices have long existed in the Pakistani community (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

The unseen world was something that Shafiq went on to explain in more detail:

There are some people who Allah blesses with *roohani taqat* [spiritual power], which helps them to help people with problems. They see jinn, they see angels, they see what is causing problems for who. You and I – we see the ‘seen’ world, we see everything that can be seen, but there is a whole world that cannot be seen, and in that world so much happens, like *kaala jaadoo* [black magic], that affects our seen world ... [A]nd only some people that are shaykhs and *pirs* can help us break away from it in the seen world.

The importance of such external forms of intervention by shaykhs and *pirs*, including through talisman and supplications, was significant in the eyes of many migrant husbands I interviewed, as they told me that they believed that black magic had been performed on them. It was as a result of this black magic that they believed they experienced ill health, marital issues, and problems with their visas upon migration, and the support of shaykhs and *pirs* was an important way to help them break the black magic spells. They often believed that jealous relatives in their home countries who were unhappy that they had been lucky enough to marry a British girl who sponsored their visas to England had resorted to black magic. Sometimes these were relatives who had wanted the migrant husband's wife to marry their own son and channelled frustration against the successful migrant through



Figure 4.3 Talismans. Photo © the author.

black magic rituals. Some migrant husbands felt that both their in-laws in England and relatives in Pakistan or Kashmir were performing black magic on them for various reasons, including long-standing familial disputes between the fathers-in-law or mothers-in-law on both sides, or jealousy over the shared wealth the migrant husband brought to his wife's family. The imagery and stories of prophets, sufis, saints, and scholars played a key role in shaping a worldview that helped manage their pressing daily problems, and provided a *roohani* (spiritual) solution that transcended the helplessness that clung to many migrant husbands. In this way, then, visiting a holy man who claimed to possess unseen, otherworldly knowledge who could solve their problems was at times also an exercise of transacting their marital affairs, as well as reasserting masculinity. In other words, *roohani taqat* was employed to alleviate them from their disadvantaged, inferior, and vulnerable positions within this particular social matrix.

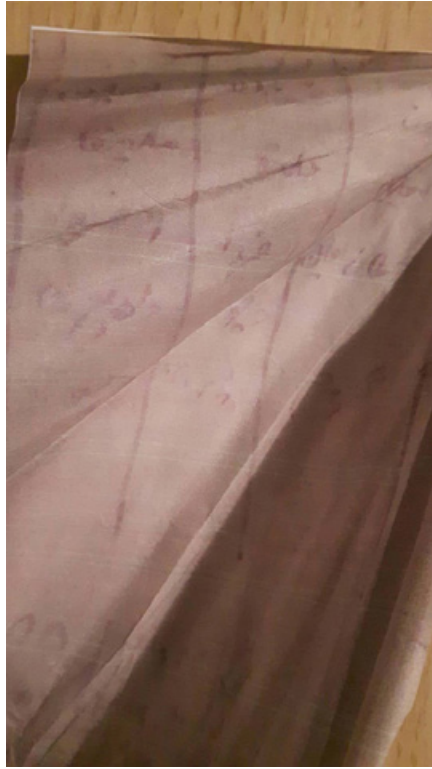


Figure 4.4 Inside a talisman. Photo © the author.

Collectively, these narratives not only provide insight into the importance of religious leaders and role models of both the past and present, to whom migrant husbands could either relate to in times of hardship or turn to for advice, but they also are indicative of the lack of state-led support systems for migrant husbands. Most migrant husbands referred to the absence of ‘official’ channels of support, whether through the National Health Service and hospitals, the police and social services, the courts,⁴ or solicitors. One of my interlocutors described an occasion when he was visiting his doctor and, while in the waiting room, he saw a poster relating to female victims of domestic violence. He told me that, although he understood the necessity of such posters, he felt there was a need for increased recognition of male victims of domestic violence (see also Hopkins 2006: 342). Certainly, in my own discussions with gate-keepers in the community when recruiting participants for both my undergraduate and doctorate research, I was struck by the number of people who simply laughed at the thought of migrant

husbands, or men, experiencing domestic violence. When preparing a list of helpful organisations to provide to my migrant husband interlocutors so that they could access support, I found that there were only a handful of organisations and helplines that did exist to support male victims of domestic violence, and most were not equipped to deal with migrant husbands of south Asian heritage due to language barriers and resource constraints.

Practising *sabr*

By engaging with these religious resources, migrant husbands can be seen to be practising agency and *sabr* (see also Qureshi 2013), despite being suspended in time and space as a result of their liminal status. Agency and *sabr* are both distinct social phenomena, which I found to be interlinked. Whereas *sabr* is an Arabic term that translates to ‘patience’, it can be used colloquially to denote an existential engagement with suffering that has particular resonance for women, and be conceptualised both as an inner strength that is directed towards God and as a capacity that is granted by God (Qureshi 2013). Within British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities, it has traditionally been seen as a feminine capacity entangled with notions of self-sacrifice and silent suffering (Qureshi 2013; Wilson 2006). *Sabr* has also been described as a passive form of agency in situations such as the Partition of India, when patient acceptance and endurance were seen to be a form of agency (Das 1997). Women in Das’ (1997) study talked about how they ‘drank their pain’ so that it disappeared from the surface to the depths of their bodies. We therefore learn as to how agency can be manifested in how people move pain inside themselves, actively hiding and embodying it.

Perhaps the most notable work on *sabr* is that of Saba Mahmood (2005), who analyses moral practices of submission as a form of agency. Mahmood’s interlocutors, who were involved in the women’s mosque movement in Cairo, urged her to consider suffering in bad marriages as a trial in which they actively practised *sabr*. Mahmood argues that, by exercising *sabr*, the women in the mosque movement were exercising agency. She stresses that this agency is inherently rooted in the Islamic doctrine that gives them their rights, although it is the doctrine that is often (mis)understood to be subjugating them. The case of migrant husbands is then important in two ways. First, it challenges the notion that *sabr* is confined to the feminine domain; and, second, it challenges the notion of agency being rooted in the dynamics that subjugates migrant husbands. Put differently, the source of agency is constructed and exercised outside the remit of the transnational and uxorilocal household dynamic in Sufi-scapes, which have a unique dynamic that is different from that of the migrant husband’s resident household in

the United Kingdom. Agency is then constructed outside the remit of the space within which the migrant husband's oppression takes place, and is then brought into this space to alter his position in the household, and, ultimately, his masculinity.

Migrant husbands often spoke about making themselves *mazboot* (strong) in order to deal with their trials and tribulations. Their inner strength would be drawn from the remembrance of God, recalling the inspirational stories of prominent men in Islamic history who defeated their enemies and remained steadfast in their faith. Yassir told me:

I am going to be honest: the words and behaviour of those we thought were our loved ones is painful to experience ... [T]hey [in-laws] want to break me, but I am strong ... [T]he strength comes from knowing that I am on the path of Allah, the path of *haq* [truth] and do not harm even an ant, but they harm those that they promised to look after ...

Inner strength was a key strand of *sabr*, which was built over time, but, for some migrant husbands, inner strength had to be drawn on after they felt betrayed and hurt by those they trusted. For example, Yassir, who was married to his cousin, told me:

I trusted my wife; I trusted her parents. My parents trusted her parents. We are family, you know. My father-in-law is my mother's brother. How could they treat me like this? When that belief and trust is shattered, overnight you become strong, you have to become strong. You don't have a choice.

Migrant husbands described inner strength in different ways. Saleem, for instance, told me:

You have to make your heart as strong as iron if you want to make it in this country. Your wife treats you badly, your in-laws treat you like a criminal, you're so far away from your family; and your kids?! They answer you back and do not understand your pain.

In this way, inner strength was drawn and built from practising Islam against the backdrop of Sufi-scapes in Birmingham, helping to strengthen the migrant husbands' hearts through images of iron, ice, concrete, and stone, to prevent them from feeling pain. *Sabr* for the migrant husbands was thus a way to numb, mute, and silence the pain inside them, in order to be able to continue their day-to-day lives. Inner strength was a way to transcend the pain of the body, into a space where migrant husbands could address what was causing their pain. Mahmood's (2005) contention that agency is rooted in that which subjugates is partially echoed here, and yet, to begin to address what was causing the pain, I found that migrant husbands first numbed that pain. Their employment of *sabr* is, therefore, not too dissimilar to the techniques Pakistani women employ in Qureshi's study (2013), or to

the ‘swallowing’, ‘embodying’, and ‘ingesting’ of pain described by Egyptian women in Mahmood’s (2001) work. The nature of suffering and the *sabr* deployed show that Pakistani and Kashmiri men and women may exercise *sabr* in similar ways, and that the gender divide is not as significant as we may think when it comes to these forms of resistance and agency.

This is further shown through the importance of suffering in silence. Although some migrant husbands found different mechanisms, such as taking *bayah* with religious brotherhoods in Birmingham, to reassert their masculinity, many initially started out suffering in silence for fear of being ridiculed. This fear stemmed from the social stigma perpetuated by the wife and/or her family, about ‘disloyal’ migrant husbands who abandon their wives after acquiring British citizenship. Silent suffering seemed to be the virtuous strand of *sabr* that migrant husbands practised (see also Qureshi 2013). At the same time, however, it demanded to be recognised at the very least in the religious realm through reward from God. Shafiq, the migrant husband who told me about using a talisman to ease his marital tensions, explained:

Suffering in silence was something I chose to do because sometimes there is no other option. My wife knew what I was feeling, and I think my suffering did make her think about what her parents were doing. Sometimes you speak, and sometimes you don’t speak, but the outcome is better when you don’t speak; people realise the truth eventually.

Here, Shafiq was employing his silent suffering in a strategic way in the hope that his wife would realise the qualities of her husband – loyal, patient, tolerant – and recognise the wrongdoing of her parents towards her husband. Shafiq’s silent suffering demanded to be heard, seen, and felt by those around him and went a long way in resolving his marital tensions, as his wife eventually moved out with him from her parents’ home, to a separate residence. Silent suffering was thus a way to suppress the pain one felt, but some migrant husbands seemed to be able to control how much of the silent suffering came to the surface as a resource in and of itself, in order to influence those around them to treat them better. In this way, then, migrant husbands employed the notion of *sabr* and silent suffering to transact better treatment from their wives and in-laws, and reassert their masculinity. Such techniques helped build an alternative social currency in which they could perform their desired form of masculinity.

In addition to *sabr* and silent suffering, migrant husbands described their trials as *zehir peena* (drinking poison), or like swallowing a sip of hot milk, which indicated a significant use of the body to internalise, process, and store hardships (see also Mahmood 2001; Qureshi 2013). The effect of the poison would be debilitating and potentially life-threatening. The

metaphor of swallowing hot milk – though less severe compared to drinking poison – connotes painful self-inflicted burns to the mouth and the throat. Such descriptions pave a way to considering not only what agency and *sabr* mean but their relationship to one another. Further, to voluntarily ingest poison and allow it to affect the body is, in the metaphorical sense, a choice the migrant husband is making, which would require superhuman sacrifice to overcome its effects on his mind and body. Embedded within this choice is the hope that things will get better. *Sabr* and agency are thus tied together intimately through the concept of *umeed* (hope) that things will get better. Expressing this sentiment in his own words, Faisal said: ‘*Umeed kadhi vi na choro* [Never leave hope].’

The hope that their situations will improve was, I found, tied to the aspirations and visions of what life as a transnational patriarch would entail. The act of *sabr*, then, through drawing inner strength, silent suffering, and images of drinking poison, was an attempt to mould circumstances to fit the social imaginary of the envisaged migrant life that some migrant husbands had carried as socially shaping narratives for many years. As a result, practising *sabr* led back to a reassertion of masculinity for migrant husbands, as it provided an alternative entry point into becoming a transnational patriarch, or transcending this masculine ideal completely. Gender was not immediately performable for migrant husbands, as is assumed in Butler’s (1990) work; rather, it requires labour to position oneself on the plane of gender performativity in order for the performativity to then begin.

Building support systems

Haider, who took *bayah* with the Chishti Sufi brotherhood led by Pir Saqib Shaami, shared with me how he had been able to make friends outside his family network. This was of particular importance to Haider, as he felt that most of his family network were supportive of his father-in-law due to his status in the community, and thus building a support system for himself independent of his father-in-law – or, as he called it, ‘his own people’ – was important to Haider. The Sufi brotherhood then became an integral part of Haider’s experience as a migrant husband.

When I first came to England, I had many visitors from my wider family come to visit, but after a few days everybody went to their own homes. In Pakistan the houses are quite open, whereas in England the houses are closed and you have to seek permission before you come and go. It became quite lonely after a few weeks ... I was only working and coming home to sleep and then going back to work. The *tareeqa* [brotherhood] was a way for me to make new friends, which brought me comfort ...

For Akbar, building a community of his own required him to break through tough stereotypes about migrant husbands within the community.

There are a lot of bad ideas the community has about us [migrant husbands], that we only came for the passport, and as soon as we get the full stay [citizenship] we will run away. I had to be careful about going out to see friends, because bad things would have been said about me. Sometimes, if I went to the local grocery store and started talking to the men at the butcher shop, my father-in-law would say I was going to fall in bad company and run away ... [B]ut, when I joined the *tareeqa*, my father-in-law did not shout or say anything bad to me ... [S]ome relatives would also attend and send the message back to my father-in-law that I was not doing anything wrong.

Making friends within the religious arena was seen to be more acceptable by some migrant husbands' families, endowing them with a socio-symbolic capital to overcome some of the stigmas attached to being a migrant husband. This echoes McDowell's (2003: 225), Hopkins' (2006: 340), and Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera's (2008: 123) scholarship, in which the notion of domestic conformity is put forward. The direction that community-making practices may take among migrant husbands, and how these are interpreted by wives and in-laws, show how patriarchy operates on vulnerable men as well as women (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). The father-in-law serves as a male gate-keeper who sets the boundaries of what counts as permissible behaviour for those in his family network. The seeking of solace and advice from a strong religious male figure points, perhaps, to the entrenchment of patriarchy across different segments of the community. Some scholars and teachers within Sufi orders in Birmingham played a paternal and pastoral role in the lives of migrant husbands, who were not only missing their families in Pakistan but also experiencing vulnerable and unstable situations upon marriage migration. One of my interlocutors, Faisal, told me about visiting his *pir* for religious guidance and to acquire talismans for spiritual remedy. He elaborated on the role of his *pir* in particular:

Many things my *pir* says remind me of my father's words and wisdom. I cannot always speak to my father, but I see my *pir* often, and it makes me feel better because I feel I have seen my father.

Asif took *bayah* (spiritual affiliation) with Pir Siddiqi, and spoke about the way in which his spiritual affiliation paved a way for him to develop a support network at the mosque with other migrant husbands and second- and third-generation British Pakistanis. He explained that he felt more supported and was able to approach his network of co-spiritual affiliates with problems he was experiencing (see also Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera 2010: 258–259). When I asked him if he could provide an example of a

problem that he had approached his affiliates with, he told me about speaking to two affiliates regarding the mistreatment he was being subjected to by his wife.

My friend from our Sufi group organised for his wife to meet my wife, and they now meet regularly. My wife has become more understanding because she knows her role as a mother and a wife in Islam and she wants to do the right thing ... [S]he advised my wife that pleasing the husband is pleasing Allah, and, if a woman shouts at her husband and treats him badly, it calls for severe punishment in the hereafter.

Asif's co-spiritual affiliates became a source of marital counselling, which reinforced ideas of masculinity entrenched in patriarchy and conservatism, as well as gendered notions of the home and marital relations. In this way, then, reasserting masculinity through the religious arena can involve being able to transact greater control over women. In other words, the reasserting of masculinity can at times involve an effort to (re)direct and (re)visit hegemonic forms of masculinity, in which men are superior to women. Thus, the resistance of migrant husbands can in some ways and in some cases be traced to undoing the changes in gender power dynamics brought on by transnationality.

As mentioned previously, religiosity can become a form of social-cultural capital (Bourdieu 2011) that migrant husbands can employ in a strategic way to reassert and recreate their masculinity. I was able to see this at work in a more nuanced way by interviewing and observing a spiritual healer, Hanif, who one of my interlocutors was actively seeking guidance from at the time I was conducting fieldwork. Hanif provided him with *taweez* (amulets) and *wazifas* (supplications) to perform in order to alleviate the marital tensions he was experiencing (see also Marsden 2005; Hoque 2019: 82). I learnt that Hanif himself was a migrant husband who had arrived in the United Kingdom in 1991 after marrying his cousin (father's younger brother's daughter).

Times were simpler then. The immigration laws were not as strict as they are today, and family situations were not as bad as they are today. As more people came to England, more *rishtas* [relationships/marriage proposals] were fixed between the children from here and the children in Pakistan, which caused a lot of problems for many families ... [T]hen there is also the issue of land and *khotiya* [mansions] ... [T]he richer people get in England, the more problems they have in Pakistan ...

Hanif shared the ways in which he navigated life as a migrant husband, leveraging his Islamic knowledge to create an alternative space in which he could reassert his masculinity. When Hanif first arrived in the United Kingdom he worked in various jobs, including as a butcher, as an assistant

to his uncle, who had his own construction company, and as a taxi driver. Hanif had received an extensive Islamic education in Pakistan, including memorizing the Qur'an and Hadith, which he wished to retain. He told me his jobs would make it difficult to pray, but he had managed to find a balance while working with his uncle, since he allowed him to take prayer breaks. Due to Hanif's religiosity in keeping up with his prayers and it widely being known that he was a *hafiz* (person who had memorised the Qur'an), family members, friends of his family, neighbours, and community members began to approach him for spiritual guidance for their problems. Over time he began to be seen as the local spiritual healer. Today, he told me, people with afflictions and problems visit him from cities as far north as Bradford and Glasgow, and as far south as London and Portsmouth, for solutions to their problems.

People from far and near visit me for help with their problems. Sometimes the husbands are drinking and gambling and wives want to bring them back on the right path, sometimes mothers-in-law are treating daughters-in-law badly, sometimes young men from Pakistan are being treated badly by their in-laws and wives, or enmities [*dushmanee*] happen between families over land issues in Pakistan, or jealous sisters-in-law are doing black magic [*kaala jadoo*] on the other sister-in-law so she doesn't have children, or daughters have run away [with a man] ... [T]here are so many issues people come to me with.

When asked about the different solutions he provides to his 'patients', Hanif told me:

I provide supplications [*wazifas*] for people to read on a daily basis to help ease the difficulties they are going through ... I provide talismans [*taweez*] to people to keep on them by wearing it around their neck, or by soaking the talisman in water and giving it to the troubled person, or sprinkle the water around the house where problems are happening ... [S]ometimes I give talismans to burn on regular basis for a length of time ...; the more difficult the problem, the longer they should burn the talisman for ...

There was a particular method that Hanif often employed in his healing sessions to understand the problem his patients were suffering.

I pour into the ink pot's lid and I begin to read some supplications [*wazifas*]. I call on my spiritual elders who have passed this *ruhaani taqat* [spiritual power] to me. Through the ink, they allow me to see why someone is experiencing difficulty. Sometimes in the ink it even shows me the face of the person and the name of who is performing black magic [*kaala jadoo*] on the people, but I do not tell my patients because they go back and accuse the people, and say I told them, which causes me problems, so I do not give specific names no matter how much my patients plead with me.

I asked Hanif if I might be able to sit in on one of his spiritual healing sessions, and he agreed. I was given strict instructions to follow to ensure that I was not negatively affected by bad spirits through the removal of the black magic that patients were potentially afflicted with. These instructions included not to be menstruating, to wear clean clothing, and to perform *wudu* (ablution) before attending the healing session.

When I arrived at Hanif's house, I stood outside his front door. A lady opened the door – his wife, I was later told – and she told me that I needed to enter the side door. I knocked on the side door of an extended section of the house, possibly what may have previously been a garage or driveway. A young boy opened the door for me, and I saw a man in the corner, sitting on a cushion, with prayer beads in his hands, who seemed to be engaged in reciting something to himself. He nodded to acknowledge my arrival and indicated that I should come in and take a seat on the right-hand side of the room. I removed my shoes near the door, and took a seat on a cushion on the floor. A healing session was currently in progress. A middle-aged woman, her two daughters, and her grandson were seated across on the left-hand side. The room was a small space, perhaps three metres in width and four or five metres in length. Islamic scriptures and motifs hung on the walls and straw woven mats carpeted the floor. Hanif was leaning against a wooden chest of draws, which I later saw him access for talismans and supplications. He had printed these in bulk to dispense to his patients during healing sessions.

The session I had been able to observe was focused on issuing spiritual healing for the better health of the middle-aged woman's husband, who had suffered a stroke a few days previously. There seemed to be a hierarchy of medical healing in the Pakistani and Kashmiri community, who sought spiritual holy men to administer medical advice and healing in parallel to National Health Service (NHS) professionals. During the two hours spent in the healing session I also witnessed a migrant husband turn up, who came with his older brother to seek a remedy for his wife's lack of love towards him. Hanif informed him that his wife had had a boyfriend prior to marrying him, and she continued relations with him after marriage. Hanif provided the migrant husband talismans to burn every day for a month, and a supplication to read every morning to break the relationship between the wife and her boyfriend. I also witnessed a woman who attended with her sister, who had been unable to conceive for five years. Hanif saw in the ink that there were a number of family members who had performed black magic on her so that she could not bear children to her husband, who was the only son and therefore inheritor of his father's wealth and land. She was instructed to read a number of supplications at different times (between now and her next ovulation cycle and before intercourse with her husband), and

to burn talismans for 14 days to break the *asr* (effect) of the black magic that had been performed on her.

Through these observations, it became apparent that Hanif had access to the most intimate arenas of his patients' lives, and had space annexed to his home that was dedicated to these spiritual healing sessions. He was a trusted healer within the Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim community in Birmingham, and the United Kingdom more widely. Between March 2018 and August 2018 I observed five spiritual healing sessions. I asked Hanif how being a spiritual healer impacted his life as a migrant husband. He told me that being a spiritual healer earned him respect within the community (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130), without which he felt that his treatment at the hands of his in-laws would have been worse. He described how his father-in-law was strict when he had first arrived in England, but, as people began to seek spiritual advice from him, his father-in-law changed his ways and became kinder. It was evident that Hanif's spiritual healing abilities afforded him greater currency in transacting his life as a migrant husband in the United Kingdom.

This insight from Hanif, together with those from migrant husbands such as Zaid and Yassir, whose in-laws approved of the religious social space as an acceptable space which they could visit and participate in, demonstrates that religious participation in Sufi-scapes within Birmingham is a form of religious social capital employed by migrant husbands. For Hanif in particular, religion – or religiosity, as I better describe it, as it encompasses the degree of religious practice demonstrated – was associated with 'positive' characteristics, such as loyalty, that enabled him to build a network that depended on him, and within which he had a role. This dependence enabled him to administer his skills and expertise, which generate a continuous currency of respect and honour, within both the community and his family.

Performativity

In this chapter so far, I have focused on the activities of migrant husbands: their ability to draw on religion within the Sufi-scape of Birmingham as a resource to reassert masculinity. I have posited that the reassertion of masculinity involves creating alternative social currencies, which compete with the social currencies demonstrated and exhibited by hegemonic masculinities, such as that of the transnational patriarch. Through engaging with and recalling the stories of prophets, Sufi leaders and teachers, and saints, of both the past and present, migrant husbands are able to practise *sabr*, build support systems, and acquire religious social capital, which enable them to exercise agency in different ways (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera

2008). In particular, I have demonstrated the micro-processes, which can be missed at first glance, of the ways migrant husbands navigate often vulnerable and unstable social circumstances. Migrant husbands have frequently found new ways to be migrant husbands, discovering avenues such as joining Sufi brotherhoods and visiting Muslim spiritual healers to gain transacting powers over their masculinity, (re)assert their masculinity, and in some cases even maintain their masculinity. Masculinity, then, for some migrant husbands, is worked and reworked in and through religious spaces such as that of the weekly Sufi gatherings, spiritual healing sessions, and solitary remembrance of Allah, and key prominent male figures in Islam who they weave into their (re)makings of their masculinity. As a result, prophetic or spiritual masculinity is a significant way in which migrant husbands can make sense of and navigate their situation in the United Kingdom, and thus, the past, present, and future become amalgamated and employed as a tool to exercise agency, to realise the ideal migrant husband experience of the 'transnational patriarch'.

This chapter has presented evidence contrary to the conventional understandings that *sabr* (patience) is a feminine practice, that women are practitioners of silent suffering, and the broader assumption that men are lesser emotional beings (Montes 2013). I have demonstrated here, rather, that, at the nexus of migration, marriage, and masculinity, migrant husbands practise *sabr*, that they suffer in silence which can in turn be strategically and creatively cultivated to achieve a desired outcome in the assertion of masculinity, and that migrant husbands express a range of emotion. I have also demonstrated that agency for migrant husbands is not rooted in that which subjugates them (Mahmood 2005) but, instead, is rooted first and foremost in themselves through the delicate control and conceptualisation of their bodies, particularly in relation to emotional pain (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127). This chapter also challenges assumptions that migration is a single action rather than a process. Rather, migrants can have changing motivations and altered circumstances that require modified decision-making (de Haas 2011). As a result, migrant husbands are seen to seek out creative approaches in their aspirations to become respected men and husbands, which is embodied by the 'transnational patriarchal' ideal.

The life histories of migrant husbands also point to new possibilities and innovative routes for 'escape' from certain subjectivities, but they ought not be over-romanticised (see also Constable 2003: 176), as these routes of escape can play out within hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal discourses. We learn that migrant husbands are creatively manoeuvring across transnational terrains in order to realise, reclaim, and retransact a 'respectable' marital, migrant, and masculine status, and in doing so point to migrant husbands being able to exercise agency. Some cases, however,

are punctuated with a tendency to gravitate towards acquiring ‘respectable’ forms of marriage, migration, and masculinity that lean towards traditional forms of masculinity that resonate with patriarchy (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 130). Overall, the case of migrant husbands in the British Pakistani and Kashmiri communities demonstrates that transmigration can rupture traditional structures that uphold societal ideals of gender performances, and lead men to experience the heavy emotional costs (Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 127) of migration, which they navigate through diverse social tools, including some conventionally associated with femininity. The case of migrant husbands thus demonstrates that there is a plurality of masculinities and that silence, invisibility, and suffering can invoke traits such as patience and prayer in men, which they can use as tools to transact their own masculine identities. Butler’s (1990) work on performing gender is nuanced through this ethnography, as I show that labour is carried out to arrive at an ideal position from which an ideal gender can then be performed. Performing gender can be a gated phenomenon, the barbed wires of multiple power complexes preventing trespassing. In order to cross the gates into the land of opportunity that is performing gender, it is shown that migrant husbands turn to accruing socio-religious capital through membership of Sufi brotherhoods, which helps create spaces in which they can reorient and redefine the ways in which masculinity can be performed (see also Archer 2003).

Notes

- 1 The mapping was conducted based on the information provided to me by my participants. There may, of course, be additional Sufi-spaces in Birmingham that I am unaware of as a result of my narrow research focus on migrant husbands.
- 2 See also Hoque (2019: 80), who notes that the Muslim diaspora are captivated by the notion of a ‘glorious Islamic past’. I argue that the retelling of the hardships experienced by prophets and saints enables this glorious view of the Islamic past, which contributes to the construction of ‘prophetic masculinity’.
- 3 Further research exploring whether Syrian and/or Afghan refugee and migrants to the United Kingdom engage in Sufi orders would prove to be a vibrant comparison.
- 4 A small number of migrant husbands were involved in legal proceedings for child custody, divorce, and claims of domestic violence by wives.

Decolonising Muslim men: gender, race, and colonialism

As a child in the early 2000s, Bollywood films, soap operas, and music as forms of entertainment were a common staple within the British Pakistani community. Popular songs from the 1990s elaborated on women's *gorah* (white) skin tone, a trend that remains true with Bollywood produced music today. Actresses on screen were always light-skinned, while male actors' skin tone seemed irrelevant, since the majority of them confidently performed in tanned or olive-coloured tones just as easily. Certainly, for women, the definition of Indian or south Asian feminine beauty centred on whiteness. In my teenage years Zee TV (see also Kalra 2009: 113–114) and the Star Plus TV channel, which originated in India, aired a dizzying array of dramas and soaps that presented weekly – if not daily – episodes, widely viewed within Asian and Muslim households across the United Kingdom. These programmes featured fair-skinned lead actresses, further entrenching the idea of whiteness in south Asian and Muslim cultures in a postcolonial context that was simultaneously a growing post-migrant, diaspora community in the Global North. Fair skin and public portrayals of whiteness have long been emulated by mainstream beauty products to be visible as the aspirational 'standard'. In recent years hegemonic standards of White beauty have been called to account, as witnessed, for example, during the Black Lives Matter movement and protests of 2022. Actresses such as Priyanka Chopra were criticised for modelling for skin care brands such as Fair and Lovely, an Indian skin-lightening cosmetic product (more recently rebranded as Glow and Lovely, to ward off criticisms for promoting colourism), widely sold in many parts of south Asia. Public figures, models, and actresses have also been accused of undergoing skin-lightening treatments.

The legacy of colonialism persists through the visibility and dissemination of beauty standards across the world today, with 'whiteness' as the aspired-to ideal. The promotion and aspiration of whiteness extend beyond the media–beauty–cosmetic complex, however, and reach into migration and settlement processes, through targeted pressure on individuals and their extended family networks alike. Representations of migration and British

citizenship as coveted opportunities can result in established beauty constructs that are ordinarily precursors to 'making a match' being waived, circumvented, or modified in order to achieve a marriage migration arrangement. The direction of power at play in this dynamic is crucial: it is well established that British Pakistani and Kashmiri families tend to select fairer brides for their sons. But less talked about is the fact that they often also opt for fairer grooms for their daughters. Many migrant husbands and community member interlocutors told me of the mismatch in perceptions of beauty between transnational couples, with the ability to migrate and gain citizenship often overriding conventional marital norms. In other words, for male migrants and their families, the chance to reach the shores of Great Britain can supersede the cultural requirements of matching with a 'fair bride', but it also imposes the racialised criteria that the migrant groom *looks* 'White' in order to be considered a desirable husband-to-be.

Henna, a community interlocutor aged 27, shared with me:

My cousin got married in Pakistan ... [S]he's dark-skinned and not very pretty, to be honest, but her husband, he's so *gorah* [white], like he looks *Pathan* [Pushkun] ... he has fair skin, although he doesn't have blue eyes, like a lot of *Pathans* ... [W]e were all so surprised that he married her ... I guess people don't care about pretty brides when it comes to a British passport ...

Henna was born in Birmingham and studied nursing at university. She told me of instances when cousins in her family had married men from Pakistan. She also told me of her parents' marriage, which involved her British Pakistani mother marrying her Pakistan-born father, who then became a migrant husband. Their marriage, she told me, was charred by domestic violence, brokenness, and a great deal of personal and collective pain. She was the second eldest daughter, one of six siblings, and, after witnessing a life of her father sending remittances back home to his family while her mother struggled to persuade him to commit to her and the children, she vowed she would never marry a man from 'back home'. She told me:

It is not the life I want; the culture clash is just too much, and I also am so much more educated than men from Pakistan, it is just not a match. The girls who usually do marry from abroad, and I say 'usually' because there are some exceptions, are those who didn't go to college or university, so I guess it makes sense from an educational or professional sense; they're more of a match.

Henna was signalling the transactional dynamics of transnational marriages, where matches between spouses with similar educational backgrounds were more likely to take place. She also spoke to me about the persistence of colourism in the community, which continues to dictate marriage choices both in Britain and in Pakistan and Kashmir. She detailed her personal experience involving a British Pakistani man she dated at university. His family

expressed reservations about her skin colour, complaining that she was a medium brown tone and not fair-skinned. They also objected to her lower caste. She told me about her female cousin, who had been able to marry a 'very handsome and fair-skinned groom' from Pakistan, while, in her view, her cousin was not considered to be 'beautiful'. According to Henna, grooms and their families from Pakistan were more likely to compromise conventional beauty ideals when the bride-to-be held British citizenship, indicating the transactional underpinning of such marriages.

Samina, who had moved from Bradford to Birmingham after getting married, told me that her husband's family wanted a fair-skinned bride for their eldest son. She had reservations about marrying her now husband, but, due to existing kin relations between her family and her now in-laws, her family encouraged her to consider the *rishta*. After getting to know her husband, she

agreed to marry him ...; there wasn't really an alternative. I was getting to that age and then people start to talk ... I'm a lot fairer than my husband, who is very dark skinned ... It wasn't a match physically, but I did like him, and my family was happy with it, so I said yes ...

Based on our conversation, it seemed that ideas of fairness were deeply entrenched in both brides and grooms, as Samina indirectly referred to the skin tone disparity between herself and her husband. Although she decided to proceed with the marriage, it is evident that skin tone was a significant factor during the decision-making process. Specifically, its factoring alongside family support for the marriage is indicative of the importance it can hold. She also told me about a family in Birmingham who were friends with her in-laws. The younger sister in the family felt she could not find a suitable partner in the United Kingdom due to her weight but was able to marry a man in Pakistan who later settled with her in Birmingham. 'It's interesting, you know; men from Pakistan will trade off their Bollywood dream girl image for a wife when it comes to a passport,' she added.

Throughout my fieldwork, migrant husband interlocutors often spoke to me about how skin colour was a factor influencing their marital choice in some way. The connections between ideas of whiteness and marriage and the persistent legacy of colonialism became increasingly glaring. This overlap is further underlined when the type of passport or citizenship held by the prospective bride or groom transacts, and determines the success of the *rishta*. In many ways, citizenship status demonstrated by the colour of one's passport has replaced the merit of the colour of one's skin as a vehicle for social status and mobility. What happens when we consider the intersection of skin colour and passport colour in a transnational context? What can we learn about the intricate workings of gender, race, and colonialism?

Does marriage migration in any way draw on this relationship and, if so, what role does this play in constructing multiple masculinities for migrant husbands? In this chapter, I consider the interplay between gender, race, and colonialism to understand the experience of Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim migrant husbands.

The colour of migration

For many decades male migrants married British brides for employment opportunities to pull their birth families in Pakistan out of poverty, which is also true of my own family, as my maternal grandfather arrived in the country to make a living in the cotton mills of the northern towns (see also Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008: 119; Kalra 2009: 122). More recently migration and marriage have enabled, in a Bourdieuan sense, the achievement of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (see also Thapar-Bjokert and Sanghera 2010). In previous chapters I traced how the pursuit of symbolic and economic capital forged a type of transnational patriarchal masculine form. In other words, symbolic capital grew out of what was once genuine economic opportunity, lighting the flame for continued migration, generation after generation. The symbolic capital associated with migration to England includes power and notions of a 'higher self', no doubt an extension of the lived experience of colonial rule in India, whereby the coupling of power and whiteness conquered not only lands but minds, and where the seeds of Eurocentrism and perceptions of 'civilised' ways of life were planted in the imaginations of many among the population. Colonial bureaucratic tools such as the population census and registrars exposed many to 'better' ways of conducting governance (Dumont 1980), further reinforcing notions of the 'higher self', which was synonymous with ideas of Western civilisation. Such early social perceptions of the English during the colonial era, which have partially been sustained over subsequent generations, serve as the basis for today's template of the British Pakistani or British Kashmiri masculine self. No doubt, the fact that the colonial rulers were heteronormative males who held high office and rank in the ruling classes, together with their freedom to travel between Great Britain and the Indian subcontinent, is very much reminiscent of the contemporary transnational patriarch model of masculinity, which many migrant husbands continue to aspire to in their own marriage migration journeys.

For many Muslims, migrating to the United Kingdom and many parts of the West has become increasingly difficult in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks. Indeed, many scholars describe the European Union as a gated community (van Houtum and Pijpers 2007). Increased fear of Muslims, and,

therefore, their securitisation (Blackwood 2015; Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher 2015), have significantly contributed to the racialisation of borders, leading border protection agents to racially profile Muslim passengers, migrants, and travellers (Swiney 2006; Nagra and Maurutto 2016). Muslims are seen as a threat across and within borders, which has resulted in their deployment in historical processes of nation-making and their contemporary iterations. For example, during the snap general election held in the United Kingdom in 2019, the prime minister, Boris Johnson, published an article titled 'Give me a majority and I'll keep you safe from terror', cultivating fear and anxiety among the electorate towards Muslims in a way designed to impact voting behaviour. Another prominent example is the infamous Executive Order 13769 of the former US president, Donald Trump, titled 'Protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States'; commonly dubbed the 'Muslim ban', it barred Muslims from gaining entry to the United States in 2017.

Such policies stand in juxtaposition to the United Kingdom's migration policies in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the 1960s the Foreign and Commonwealth Office put together a propaganda video in Arabic to persuade Muslim migrants to settle in Britain to help rebuild the shattered postwar economy.¹ In more recent memory, the perplexing case of young British men and women being recruited to join the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq renewed frenzied debates around good versus bad citizens, border control, and sovereign power, particularly in relation to the state's authority to strip a person of citizenship. Shamima Begum's controversial case helped to (re)position British Muslims within the nation as a potential security threat that require constant surveillance and monitoring. When combined, these various threads inform state migration policy, as the border is conceived as a barrier mechanism to prevent (Muslim) terror attacks. Similar to the containment of the population within geographic bounds during colonial rule in India, British migration policy today can be seen as keeping these very populations it once ruled over outside its geographic borders (see also Bi 2023). The question then arises: did colonial rule ever cease? Or did the parameters of colonial rule merely shift?

The UK government's position over the last 12 years (at the time of writing) has no doubt adopted a gated approach in constructing a hostile environment. Under Theresa May's time as home secretary, we saw tens of thousands of international students be deported after they were accused of forging their English language tests, a necessary requirement to approve their student visas. The foundations were also laid for the Windrush Scandal, which saw lifetime residents of the United Kingdom be deported to parts of the Caribbean they had never called home in the first place (Gentleman 2019). Despite public outcry, dozens of people from the Windrush

generation were deported, with some lives ending during the scandal before justice could be delivered. Growing up, my mum would tell us stories about her father and their frequent journeys between the Birmingham and their village in Kashmir. One specific detail that stood out in these recollections was the lack of individual passports for my mum and her siblings. My mum explained that, during the 1960s and 1970s, and even through the 1980s, she and her siblings were listed as dependents on their father's passport. The employment of individual passports is a relatively recent phenomenon regulating those that come in and out of the country. Geopolitics, together with the need for increased surveillance and the rise of technological innovations, position passports at the centre of freedom. Freedom is increasingly racialised, and embedded within colonial frameworks, as geopolitical power plays come into practice, whereby nations in the West, and in particular the United Kingdom, hold greater leverage in the global hierarchy of states (Bi 2023) through the power of passport-giving. It is widely known that to hold an American or a British passport will allow an individual entry with minimum interrogation across many parts of the world today, whereas Pakistani and Iranian passports are among the most undesired, and therefore restrict freedom of movement.

It is within this broader landscape that transnational marriages between British Pakistani and Kashmiri women and Pakistani- and Kashmiri-born men (although men from Azad Kashmir are issued with Pakistani passports) can and should be studied. Apart from these marriages, the migration opportunities for working-class men from Pakistan and Kashmir are limited, with the alternatives being to enter Europe or America, on a student visa, or to migrate to work in the Middle East, where basic labour and human rights conditions have been documented to be limited in some areas, leading to physical deprivations and poor mental health, and, in some cases, suicide (Al-Maskari et al. 2011). This landscape is further complicated by both global and domestic portrayals of Muslim men, who are more than often portrayed as wife beaters, groomers of White girls, gang members, drug dealers, criminals, and terrorists. Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim migrant husbands are therefore entering extremely hostile terrain when migrating and settling in the United Kingdom. During the aspirational migration phase, however, this usually does not factor into their decision-making. Rather, it is the endless possibilities that they imagine await them once they make it across the border, including greater social capital and upward social mobility, and therefore masculine performance. I did, nonetheless, hear frustrations voiced by migrant husbands towards the UK immigration system, namely that it was more difficult to migrate to Britain in recent times compared to the 1990s and early 2000s. One reason is the introduction of the financial threshold policy, which requires an annual income of £18,500 to sponsor a migrant

spouse (now increased to £29,000 in 2024). It is fair to say that masculine performance can be just as much transacted by state immigration policy as it is by the behaviour of wives and in-laws. Immigration policy is a significant tool in the state's repertoire, barring persons based on countries of origin, which by extension involves their racialised skin colour.

Drawing on the narratives of Henna and Samina contained within the opening of this chapter, it is possible to trace how migrant husbands can in some cases trade conventional beauty standards that centre on fair skin – and, by extension, whiteness – for the chance to migrate to the United Kingdom. Thus, the prospect of obtaining a British passport, sometimes referred to as a 'red passport' by my interlocutors and members of the Pakistani and Kashmiri communities, overrides the colourism in conventional beauty ideals. It can also be argued that the direction of migration westwards also signifies travelling towards whiteness (see also El-Tayeb 2011). The question that arises next is: does holding a British passport symbolise whiteness in the context of transnational marriage between British Pakistani or Kashmiri women and Pakistani- or Kashmiri-born men? It could certainly be argued that this set-up of marriage migration can and does behave as adopting whiteness, particularly as the Pakistani passport is considered to be one of the most undesirable to possess in the world. More broadly, concepts such as the American dream might be better understood as the 'White American dream' and play a significant role in inspiring migrants to make the trip to the West. As for the concept of freedom, symbolised by the colour of one's passport, the implications involve consolidating the view that to be free is to be White (see Stovall 2021).

Performing race through citizenship

The recurring centrality of whiteness in the migrant husband's experience of his marriage migration becomes more visible by reframing it as an iteration of the pursuit of the 'White American dream'. This, in turn, facilitates a reconceptualisation of the construction of masculinity as experienced by, and in the name of, migrant husbands. Previously, I showed how masculinity is configured for migrant husbands through the consolidation of the transnational patriarch ideal. Three key stumbling blocks (immigration and visas, wives and in-laws, and employment) can disrupt the migrant husbands' ability to achieve transnational patriarch status, however, as the transactional power of their migrant husband status, and, by extension, their masculinity, is directed away from them to wives, in-laws, and even employers. Although at first glance immigration/visas and employment might be seen as largely state-regulated and therefore somewhat more influential, it is

in fact wives and in-laws that gate-keep access to these tokens for migrant husbands. For example, the migrant's spousal visa can be submitted only by his British Pakistani wife, which shifts agency and autonomy away from the male migrant to his wife and her family. As a result, from the outset of the important *rishta* talks and transactions, wives and their families wield considerable bargaining privileges, including the signing over of family wealth and land to the bride through the *nikaah* (Islamic marriage contract) as her agreed dowry. At any point of the immigration application process, the wife and her family can withdraw their formal sponsorship of the applicant groom-to-be or husband.

Throughout my fieldwork, interlocutors recounted stories about marriages that did not get as far as this stage, instead ending abruptly prior to reaching an agreement between the families. Upon migration and settlement in Britain, however, employment for many of my interlocutors was acquired through the networks of the wife's family, which again indicates their powerful gate-keeping role. In the examples of songs of sorrow mapped out in [Chapter 3](#), the wife is portrayed as being in possession of her migrant husband's passport and wages, both of which he dutifully places in her hands, as though fulfilling a contractual condition of their marriage, which entitles him residency rights in Britain. Further, even though the initial visa may be granted, new Home Office immigration rules require visa holders to renew their visa after two years of the spouse entering the United Kingdom, and only after ten years have passed, and the couple can show they are still married, is the indefinite leave to remain granted. Since obtaining the required visa, citizenship, and employment are fundamental tenets of the transnational patriarchal ideal, the wife and family's monopoly over his future often means that the migrant husband's dream of becoming a transnational patriarch remains merely a dream.

One might ask: why do wives and in-laws – who are in some cases the migrant's relatives – prevent him from independently working to reach the goal of becoming a successful transnational patriarch? Key to answering this question is the positionality of wives and their families, marked by *secure and assured* British citizenship, which is juxtaposed against the *insecure or precarious* citizenship status of the migrant husband. The latter is entirely at the mercy of his wife and in-laws, as the state can consider his application only if it has been submitted on his behalf by his wife. The unidirectional assertion of power is jolting, positioning the migrant husband as an inferior newcomer to both the household and the country, and entirely at the whim of his wife and her relatives. Precarious citizenship status not only shapes the powerlessness of his masculine form but is also indicative of the migrant husband's race and racial identity. Although such men may have aspired towards whiteness (and the consumerist, capitalist trappings that

accompany it) by deciding to marry a British Pakistani woman and migrate to Britain, they often experience whiteness as exclusion and asymmetrical power upon their arrival in this new world. This whiteness, in contrast to their expectations, is embodied as power by the wife and her family through their secure citizenship status, affording them greater transacting power over the migrant husband. Migrant husbands find their agency is stripped away or interrupted as they come to occupy the spaces of conventionally marginalised races, and therefore embody the experiences that, for generations, Black, Asian and ethnic persons have been subjected to through micro-aggressions and structural discrimination. This is also evidenced by the common term ‘freshie’, abbreviated from ‘fresh off the boat’ – a derogatory term used by British-born Pakistanis and Kashmiris to both refer to and insult migrant husbands. Although Butler (1988) argues that gender can be performed, the stories and struggles of the migrant men I encountered show that race – and racialised power – can also be performed through the possession of secure citizenship in a Western state. It is precisely this performance of whiteness by wives and in-laws that produces multiple masculinities for the migrant husband, causing him to perceive himself as weak or worthless, even being subjected to domestic violence. In any circumstance other than the marriage migration context, a recently married Pakistani or Kashmiri Muslim man would seldom be considered inferior to his wife and in-laws. Indeed, we rarely see the inverting of the heteronormative masculine ideal in cases when a married couple are both British Pakistani or Kashmiri, or both Pakistani or Kashmiri nationals.

We might consider the whiteness that is aspired to in and through migration and citizenship for migrant husbands to conflict with the whiteness performed by wives and in-laws prior to marriage and migration, which may perhaps have been demonstrated through actions and words, and, in particular, the demands placed on the migrant husbands and their families prior to confirming the *rishta*. Why, then, do migrant husbands continue with marriage migration, even when there are early indications of power struggles, controlling behaviour, possibly even violence? The stories of migrant husbands who have been treated this way do travel back to aspiring migrant husbands in Pakistan and Kashmir, but, even so, we see migrant husbands continue to opt to marry British Pakistani women when given the option. The answer to this puzzle lies with the concept of marriage itself, which is highly gendered in the Pakistani and Kashmiri communities. It is the norm for women to be homemakers and men to be the breadwinners, not only in Pakistan and Kashmir but also within the British Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora. Only recently, perhaps in the last decade or so, have these ideals begun to shift slightly, when, due to the rising cost of living, two incomes are seen as better than one. Shabir, a 34-year-old migrant husband

from Jhelum in Pakistan who arrived in Birmingham in 2014, told me: ‘I knew my uncle [mum’s brother] was quite strict, but I thought that marriage, the Islamic *nikaah*, would give me the rights of a husband, and that this would be respected ...’ Upon arriving in the United Kingdom, however, Shabir endured two and a half years of abuse, after which another uncle (father’s brother) helped to arrange his divorce, with the guarantee that his wife would apply for his indefinite leave to remain in the country, thereby granting his citizenship. In some cases, when the abuse the migrant husband has been subjected to becomes public knowledge within the community, this can lead to dishonour and shame for the wife and in-laws. As a result, their leveraging power in deporting the migrant husband is reduced, and interventions from family members, particularly from established male kin who were once migrant husbands themselves, can assist in transacting the terms for citizenship during familial divorce proceedings.

Decolonising Muslim men

Muslim men are predominantly seen through the Western lens, projecting often negative, hurtful, and misinformed images that are highly political and stubbornly persistent. Even in the Global South, portrayals of Muslim men are considerably influenced by those perpetuated in the West, represented as naturally prone to criminality, thuggery, and misogyny. The real-world implications of hateful speech and stereotypes can be life-shattering. For example, India and China have peddled views of the ‘terrorist Muslim man’ to justify some of their abhorrent state-sanctioned security measures against Muslim communities, which international bodies such as Amnesty International have deemed to amount to serious human rights breaches. The case of migrant husbands from Pakistan and Kashmir in Britain upends these negative portrayals in some ways, however, albeit while simultaneously creating new ones. We learn that Muslim men can occupy weakened positions, can be subjected to domestic violence, and can exercise agency and resistance on their own terms, and, by extension, divert from their heteronormative masculinity. In Connell’s (2005) terms, then, they demonstrate multiple masculinities – a concept that is at times extended to Muslim men in the scholarship (see Hopkins 2006: 349–350; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008), but rarely within mainstream public discourse. Proof lies in my own personal experience. The lack of funding provided by my university to support my doctoral research meant that I was faced with the possibility of abandoning my project, and therefore my interlocutors, many who had entrusted me with their intimate life stories. Regrettably, I experienced first-hand how Western academic institutions can perpetuate harmful colonial

tropes, and, unable to step out from the shadows of their colonial histories and funding bodies, serve as vessels for subjugation and marginalisation even as they vow to oppose it. The ethnography I have presented in this manuscript has undoubtedly been supported by my supervisors and mentors but was structurally almost unfeasible from the outset, which speaks volumes about the priorities and focus areas of some universities, particularly regarding the divisive subject of Muslims. Had my research focused on exploring how migrant husbands are vulnerable targets of radicalisation, or how they pose a national security threat, I believe this would have been more likely to interest research councils and universities to provide me with generous funding.

Another issue to contemplate is how necessary it has become to tirelessly interrogate the binary that is often presented between the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'. My ethnography demonstrates that as an overlooked community from the traditionally conceived 'Global South', migrant husbands – counterintuitively, perhaps – experience precarity and vulnerability in the 'Global North'. Many endure poor living conditions, inadequate labour rights, and a lack of free and accessible support for victims of domestic violence – all ills that are traditionally assigned to life in the Global South, but that are inescapable in the Global North. As a woman of the margins occupying the Global South in the Global North, by researching migrant husbands who are from the rest of the world, the periphery, the other places (the many euphuisms used to designate spaces outside the West), I show that geographic territories and the symbolism attached to them can be irrelevant in shaping our personhood and social experiences. In other words, the Global South is reproduced in the Global North for people who are deemed to be 'from' or 'of' the former. Put differently, despite residing in the Global North, which is fashioned as a prosperous, developed, and civilised place, the lived reality can be quite the opposite for marginalised and racialised bodies despite birthright. Compounds of colonial rule continue to exist, circulate, and operate, pushing Black and ethnic communities to the margins of society in the United Kingdom. Such postcolonial misrepresentations also form a crucial tool in ongoing practices of nation-making as the beliefs, traditions, and ideas of Muslim communities – unfortunately, also those terrorist activities carried out by minority fringe members – are employed to portray all Muslims as potential threats within the nation. Outside the nation, the narrative that Muslim men are oppressors is crucial to sovereign nation-making, elevating the West, by way of external military invasions and occupations, above allegedly 'uncivilised' spaces such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where 'Muslim women need saving from oppressive Muslim men' (Abu-Lughod 2013; see also Hopkins 2006: 343).

I anticipate the counter-argument that Muslim Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant husbands are not victims of state transaction and oppression but are, rather, abused by their own co-nationals and co-ethnics, even their own close blood relatives. But family members, I argue, behave as the arm of the state, like the prison officers in Foucault's all-seeing panopticon (1991), keeping watch over others for the sake of the survivability of the state apparatus. In different ways, the panopticon can be seen as being adopted in our contemporary world to convert the ordinary citizen into a watch tower, such as through the 'See it, Say it, Sort it' message broadcast to millions of London Underground commuters every day as they traverse the maze of the city (Bi 2020). It is true that, for many British Pakistani and Kashmiri families, exercising control over other men in the kin system provides the greatest *from of izzat* (Fischer 1991: 102). For the state, however, such control represents a form of devolution of power to the individual, authorising citizens to regulate the bodies of other citizens on its behalf. In this way, subjugation and violence are carried out from a distance from the state, providing the illusion of the state's lack of involvement, its culpability. This has a striking resemblance to Dumont's (1980) argument pertaining to the creation of social divisions through census monitoring by British colonial rulers in India within the population, which primarily led to religious tensions in the Indian subcontinent, eventually resulting in civil war, followed by the Partition of India in 1947.

To bring the discussion back to the complex intersection of colonialism, citizenship, and race (see also Kalra 2009), it is important to recognise how wives and their extended families perform the role of the state by gate-keeping the entry rules for Pakistani grooms. Applying the racial and racialisation framework can help us analytically broaden the scholarship on migration and diaspora studies, revealing the ways in which the migrations journeys and post-settlement experiences of migrant men from the Global South are experienced in racialised and inferiorised terms. The desirability of residency, work opportunities, and eventual British citizenship are seen as markers of whiteness for Pakistani and Kashmiri migrant men, but obtaining these goals means encountering and enduring their own racialisation in Britain.

Race and colonialism are therefore vital frameworks within which the construction of masculinity for migrant husbands takes place. The ivory tower can be another arm of the state, through which such perceptions can be upheld. For example, as an undergraduate at Oxford University, I was taught by a demographer whose publications were inherently Islamophobic, since he openly claimed that, if the state did not intervene to regulate Muslim fertility rates, Muslims would take over the native British population by 2050 (Coleman 2006). His claims were never questioned or called out for what

they were by faculty members. Instead, he continued to teach his views to undergraduates – lectures that I painfully sat through. The decolonisation discourse of recent years has made significant strides regarding curriculum content, but still largely omits the need to decolonise institutional structures. A pragmatic example of decolonising structures would, for example, require universities to publish the master's or doctoral dissertation proposals they have funded. If the projects confirm the 'Western gaze' (Said 1978) and promote or condone the marginalisation of communities outside the West, the university's global and national ranking should be lowered. The task of decolonising Muslim men can be achieved only through genuine research that considers their multiple masculinities (see also Hopkins 2006: 349–350; Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008), which can then be translated into evolving literature that can be added to the curriculum (see Bi 2021). In the absence of such an approach, it is virtually impossible to conduct ethical research on Muslim communities, particularly exploring the experiences of Muslim men.

Note

- 1 Link to YouTube documentary: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x8ym4RboZ4&t=3s.

Conclusion

The book has explored marriage and masculinities in motion among migrant husbands in Birmingham's British Pakistani community, posing three overarching questions. The first question explored the ways that migrant husbands have experienced marriage migration to the United Kingdom. In order to answer this question, sub-questions focused on tracing the potential shifts in the anticipated versus lived social reality upon marriage and migration to the United Kingdom; how these compared to the expected shifts prior to marriage and migration; and how migrant husbands experienced these shifts based on intersectional identity markers such as social class, citizenship status, and religion. The second research question aimed to explore the ways in which migrant husbands perceived the relationship between marriage, migration, and masculinity, which was further broken down into sub-questions that focused on perceptions of how marriage migration should be experienced, perceptions of being a man, perceptions of changes in gender dynamics, and perceptions of their relationship with the state, which is largely gated by wives and in-laws. The third research question asked: how do migrant husbands perceive and negotiate their positions in their wives' and/or in-laws' households? This also consisted of sub-questions, including: how do migrant husbands think they should experience the wives' and/or in-laws' household, how do they negotiate their relationship with members of the household, how do they perceive the relationship in relation to the household, do they develop any relations outside their wives' and/or in-laws' household, and, if so, how is support made available, and in what forms, to migrant husbands?

One of the primary objectives pursued throughout this book has been to show that gender divisions between men and women may not be as significant as once imagined in the individual and intimate practices of pain, suffering, and *sabr*. The long shadow of colonial histories and the persistent, ever-evolving politics of racism shape these experiences, influencing the expression of masculine identities and experiences, even what is submerged or invisible. In tracing the migrant husbands' experiences, temporal points

defined by the migration journey were rendered insignificant and, instead, the locus of aspirations for migration became the cursor to understanding migrant husband experiences, prior to the boarding of a plane. Through the lens of aspirations, I was able to learn of the colonial lineage that continues to breathe life into transnational uxori-local marriage, whereby some men continued to migrate through marriage to the United Kingdom despite the risks associated with this form of migration and settlement. Symbols of colonial power were potent in local towns and villages, piercing the skylines in the form of elaborate mansions built with remittances sent by prior generations of migrant husbands, transacting the aspirations of migrant men of future generations.

This leads me to posit the theory of ‘social migration’ as a contribution to migration theory. Unlike social mobility, which I view as the migration of people in and through the labour market and/or their becoming less or more profitable and profited bodies within a capitalist system, social migration involves (a) the migration of spaces and places as well as people, (b) the migration of people and the ways in which they affect space and place throughout different stages of the migratory journey, and (c) the ways in which the former two interact to create new sub-spaces, such as ‘Sufi-scapes’. Social migration also captures the way in which intersectional markers such as gender and generation experiences impact and are impacted in and through transnational migration, as they too experience social migration. Although the field of migration focuses primarily on the migration of people, social migration theory can enable a more and a nuanced understanding of the drivers of people-based migration and the ways in which space and place, and embodied experiences, can also experience migration. The pertinent example of lavish mansions built through the sending of remittances by successful pioneer generations of migrant husbands demonstrates that the space and place of the United Kingdom migrates to and settles in Pakistan and Kashmir as part of its geographical landscapes. Thereby, it also migrates in the landscapes of social imaginaries of Pakistani and Kashmiri citizens, wherein the aspirations and desire to migrate are invoked. The aspiration for migration through marriage, then, is, essentially, an aspiration to power, over both people and place. As Fischer (1991) states, the ultimate form of *izzat* is to control men from the extended kin network.

In a similar way to British colonial rule in India, becoming the transnational patriarch by having a successful marriage, demonstrated by a family, and a successful business, demonstrated through remittances, would enable migrant husbands to provide for families both in Britain and in Pakistan. It is the intimate and often violent and disruptive journeys that migrant husbands make through marriage and migration that not only deviate from

these aspirations but also reawaken colonial forms of power, refashioned and transacted in and through the immigration system. The settlement process, which includes seeking and acquiring employment, is an additional domain in which migrant husbands experience disruption and violence. In showing the different forms of precarity, vulnerability, and 'stuckness' that migrant husbands experience, the book furthers the anthropological theory of liminality. I have shown that migrant husbands' masculinity is framed by processes of liminality, which pushes the concept further than its original application to transitional social periods. Liminality, I argue, can be applied to social experiences such as migration, as well as persons such as migrant husbands, who could embody the liminality as a state due to their precarious and vulnerable situations. Such embodiment of liminality then helped conceive migration as not only a process but also as a series of waithoods, or liminal phases. This finding opens the door to yet another contribution to the literature: that gender is not performed, as Butler (1990) puts it, but, rather, that gender is performed *on*, through power and control. Migrant husbands are shown to be travelling towards a position from which they can then perform their ideal masculine form of the transnational patriarch. Performativity, then, also comprises migration and migrations of the self. The position from where gender can be performed is not always arrived at, however, as the changes brought about through migration and marriage have lasting impacts.

The practice of resistance to the oppression experienced at the hands of wives, in-laws, and the state is crucial in migrations of the self from where the ideal masculine form can be performed. Songs of sorrow were identified as a space that enables migrant husbands to practise agency and resistance. Although the language used often carries patriarchal overtones, patriarchy, or the once elevated position provided to migrant husbands, songs of sorrow are a form of escapism, bringing migrant husbands to pre-liminal gendered expectations and realities. A common language of marginality can be seen unfolding through these musical lamentations, which, in their public-facing nature, create the hope for accountability for migrant husbands' plight. Other forms of agency and resistance are transacted through partaking in Sufi gatherings, in which migrant husbands are able to forge new friendships outside their marriages and marriage households, remember the stories of Prophets who came before them and who also experienced hardships, and emulate new masculinities rooted in the religious experience, which in some instances cross-transfer as social capital in the domestic spheres of migrant husbands. In all these spaces, multiple realms of masculinity are invoked simultaneously; from the aspirational masculinity, to liminal masculinity, to reassertive and spiritual masculinity. Migrant husbands constantly (re)visit these multiple forms of masculinity, often simultaneously, in order to be able

to perform in the ideal and aspired-to masculine form of the transnational patriarch.

A common thread in and through these multiple realms is the rethinking of intimacies and kin relations in light of the state's tools, which include wives and in-laws as arms of the state. It is not only the state's systems that produce the conditions for the embodiment of liminal masculinity; migrant husbands' wives and in-laws also become a vehicle for the production of these less than ideal conditions. From verbal, psychological, and physical abuse, to derogatory comments targeted at skin colour and immigration status, such as *kaalu* (blackie) and 'freshie' (fresh off the boat), wives, in-laws, and British-born Pakistanis in the broader community have been complicit in perpetuating and reproducing harmful colonial, and racist, legacies. The concept of deportation was a technique through which migrant husbands were transacted. Often used as a threat, deportation for migrant husbands involved stigma and shame for returning to their home country as disgraced returnee migrants, rather than successful transnational patriarchs. The role of citizenship, therefore, has become a tool of oppression used by a relatively oppressed minority in the United Kingdom, due to their social positionality, against a more recent oppressed arrival into the country.

Race, racism, and colonialism are therefore important themes throughout the book, which at first glance may seem solely to aim to enlighten readers about men's experiences of migration. Truth be told, ethnographic fieldwork often requires scholars to carefully carve out the parameters of research similar to a photographer's lens and resultant frame. As all photographers tend to do at some point or another, however, the employment of the zoom function becomes crucial in highlighting particular elements of the frame. In this book, we learn that a zoomed-out lens and a zoomed-in lens both highlight the role of colonialism and race (re)production (see also Kalra 2009) in and through migration journeys. In fact, it is the performance of race, as I have argued, that becomes increasingly apparent when we study the role of wives and in-laws, who, through their British citizenship, exercise increasing transactional power through enacting violence against the migrant husband. Wives and in-laws often cited the honouring the state's rules and regulations, as a justification for their behaviour. One of the book's contributions, therefore, concerns the way in which the state immigration system can be employed as a tool of oppression by the kin of migrants.

Another area in which the ethnography makes significant contributions is that of men and masculinity studies. The research demonstrates that masculinity is indeed multiple and complex, as theorists such as Connell (2005) have established. The masculinity of migrant husbands emerges in light of the oppression perpetuated by the state – through immigration policies, for instance. As a result, I argue that the state embodies the ultimate

hegemonic masculine ideal, which migrant husbands are in different ways, and in at different times and often in multiple and intersecting spaces, attempting to navigate and manoeuvre. This is supported by the sentiments expressed by migrant husbands, including the way in which the state provides women with welfare benefits and more rights (see also Jansen 2008; Este and Tachble 2009; Al-Sharmani 2010; Kleist 2010), and their feeling constantly belittled and powerless in the face of the state's immigration rules and regulations. The construction of alternative social currencies, such as through songs of sorrow, Sufi-scapes, and performing finances, afforded migrant husbands with a greater degree of transacting power over the lives as migrant husbands and, by extension, their masculinities, through which they could transcend the state's policies, and therefore compete with the masculinity of the state.

The research also contributes to the anthropology of Islam and Muslim societies, as it shows that religiosity in terms of the Islamic faith can be practised in varying shades, depending on the context. It also echoes the arguments made by Joseph (1996), that patriarchy in Muslim societies can subjugate males, as well as females. Leading on from this, the research also adds to feminist anthropology, as it demonstrates nuances in female autonomy in a transnational context. From a feminist ethnographic perspective, as a researcher I have woven together intersectionality, positionality, and personal feminism. In doing so, I have demonstrated that, to practise feminist ethnography, we must distance ourselves from the prejudices embedded within and inherent in and to our positionalities, which can prevent us from viewing invisible and/or vulnerable and/or oppressed communities.

The 'personal feminism' approach that I have developed through this research is defined as one such that it enables the individual to exercise and practise it as a form of speaking truth to power, in spite of current or popular understanding of vulnerable groups and/or any personal negative experiences with individuals that self-identify within these groups. As a British Muslim woman of Kashmiri heritage, exploring subjectivity and hardship among Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim migrant men who are at times viewed as powerful masculine authorities in patriarchal societies is perhaps unconventional. In doing so, I have interrogated and disrupted the power of patriarchy that can oppress *both* men and women, at times by positioning men and women against one another, which can cloak common experiences such as practising *sabr*, as explored in this investigation.

My positionality also extends to being born and raised in one of the poorest constituencies in the United Kingdom (Hodge Hill, Birmingham), and being subjected to intersectional, multiple, and complex forces of oppression at different stages of my life. A recent report by the United Nations confirms that parts of the United Kingdom in fact resemble developing

countries due to the abject poverty (United Nations 2018) disadvantage people are experiencing. In line with Connell, who ‘notes that there are multiple souths in the world, including “souths” (and southern voices) within powerful metropolises, as well as multiple souths within multiple peripheries’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley 2019: 3), my background positions me as a woman not only of borders and margins (Dikotomis 2005: 7) but also as one who embodies the ‘South’ (as conventionally understood) in the ‘North’ (as conventionally understood) (see Connell 2014b). Although Connell and others have, admirably and rightly, made the case for a world-centred rather than a metropole-centred approach to the study of men and masculinity studies (Connell 2014c: 227), I push for the advancement of this through my positionality. In other words, the investigation furthers what is conventionally understood as ‘North–South’ research, in which the North and its academic institutions are privileged, as it embodies a form of ‘South–South’ research in the North. This is to say that, because of my positionality as a woman of colour born and raised in a working-class, socio-economically deprived area that resembles countries of the Global South (as documented recently by the United Nations 2018), researching the vulnerabilities of migrant husbands is an example of ‘South–South’ research in the ‘North’. By implication, then, this also interrogates and unhinges spatial geography (i.e. North versus South) from experienced geography (i.e. inequality and oppression of various and multiple forms) (see also Connell 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 45–49; de Sousa Santos 2014; Davis and Boehmer 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Tafira 2019).

Both my positionality and the positionality of my interlocutors are further demonstrated in the institutional structures of the academy (see also Murrey 2019), as this research had not been funded through a UK Research Council or my then institution, University College London. The structures of the academy, which are rooted in coloniality (Murrey 2019; Patel 2019), determine which research is important, who decides it is important, and how the researcher, the research, and the researched are supported (see Smith 1999, also cited by Patel 2019). My research proposed to explore alternative and diverse sets of Muslim men’s experiences, which disrupted the White gaze (Patel 2019: 62) inherent in the academy, within which Muslim men are researched and read in a particular way. It is my position that, had my proposed research aimed to explore terrorism among Pakistani men, or reflected the already established grand narratives surrounding Muslim men, the doctorate study would have received funding. The conventional grand narratives maintained and perpetuated by the academy in the way it conducts itself, together with my researcher positionality and the broader literature on Muslim men, which largely vilifies them, have generated a particular reflection: this investigation has decolonised the experiences of

Muslim men, who even in the ‘metropole’ are subjected to multiple, intersectional, and overlapping gazes that determine their position in society, and which go on to shaping their social experiences more broadly. Earlier, I argued that the decolonisation of Muslim men had been made possible as a result of (a) the embodiment of the ‘South’ by both the researcher and the researched, and (b) the resistance to the multiple and overlapping structural forms of oppression the researcher and the research (and thereby the researched) have been subjected to in and through the academy. This has not only resulted in the incorporation of the voices of subaltern and marginalised communities but also demonstrated the ‘doing’ of decolonial thought’ in practice and embodiment, while simultaneously subverting the gaze (see also Said 1978) towards the academy. In doing so, the research has reorientated Muslim men’s experiences within the academic spaces of knowledge production.

Future research initiatives should contribute to and continue to develop the line of enquiry with regard to decolonising Muslim men. An example of such research may include the exploration of Muslim men’s mental health experiences and access to services such as through the NHS or the police, which have often viewed migrant husbands as perpetrators and not victims of domestic violence. In recent years men’s mental health has received greater coverage and has been increasingly discussed through social media and news media and in popular culture. I have noted, however, that these conversations exclude Black and ethnic men, affording White men both the representation and support. For instance, in March 2019 a leading mental health charity in the United Kingdom, the Samaritans, tweeted: ‘Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50, with men aged 20–59 at the biggest risk of suicide. Our new campaign shares real stories from men who’ve been through tough times, encouraging other men to seek help when they need it.’¹ The campaign video embedded within this tweet, however, featured only White Caucasian men talking about their mental health struggles; there were no Black and/or ethnic minority men included in this campaign video.² Similarly, in May 2019 *The Guardian* tweeted an article about two radio DJs (White Caucasian) claiming that they were changing the way men were talking about mental health (Hancox 2019).

As we know from social science research, positionality matters. By tweeting about mental health among men but featuring only White Caucasian men in doing so, these organisations with a large Twitter (now X) following, have in my view, created hierarchies in and between men along racial and ethnic lines, as to which men can and cannot talk about mental health, and to access mental health services. This further polarises men’s experiences,



Figure 6.1 Samaritans tweet regarding suicide levels among men, containing a link to their campaign video, which featured only White Caucasian men.

which will eventually manifest in varying – and hierarchical – societal behaviours and patterns in masculine performance.

A similar approach is undertaken in counter-extremism narratives, which intensify and fixate the gaze of the state on Muslim men, creating a one-dynamic and unnuanced narrative of Muslim men's engagement with religion. As I explored in [Chapter 4](#), the Sufi-scape of Birmingham suggests, however, that Muslim men engage in Islamic religious practice in new and creative ways, which gives rise to new masculinities among Muslim men. The implications of these new masculinities for marriage and family formation trends among British Muslims are currently unexplored, but they will hold valuable insights for demographic trends. Therefore, complementing my study on Muslim migrant men's experiences in/through Britain, a study exploring aspirational, liminal, and spiritual masculinity among British-born Muslim men is necessary. Throughout my research I encountered and spoke with a number of British-born Muslim men, and



Figure 6.2 A tweet by *The Guardian* containing a link to an article about two White Caucasian DJs ‘changing the way men talk about mental health’.

found that there were parallels not only in their experiences with migrant husbands but also in the spaces they occupy. For instance, the Sufi-scape that many migrant husbands navigated was dominated by young British Muslim men. Although such encounters through my ethnographic field-work provide perhaps anecdotal evidence, my expertise within the field leads me to identify a positive correlation between low levels of educational attainment, disadvantaged residential area, high rates of unemployment, poverty, media representations of Muslim men, and crisis in masculinity, on the one hand, and the high numbers of young (18 to 30 years of age) British Muslim who had taken *bayah* with a Sufi brotherhood and attended weekly Sufi gatherings at one of the local *zawiyas*, on the other. Since these spaces are crucial in the construction of masculinity as demonstrated for Muslim migrant husbands, it is important to explore the way in which masculinity is constructed among British-born Muslim men in and through Sufi-scapes, and, furthermore, to explore the relationality of these

British-born Muslim men with Muslim men born and raised elsewhere. A feminist ethnographic approach in which compassion is integral is crucial for this research; but it is equally important for this compassionate feminist ethnographic approach to be penalty-free within the structures of the academy for the researchers involved.

Notes

- 1 See <https://x.com/samaritans/status/1107914606016520192>.
- 2 I tweeted in response to the campaign, highlighting the lack of diversity within it, which could result in further reinforcing racial and ethnic divides in access to mental health among men.

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