

## "Violence in Bradford"

Riots involving ethnic minority groups are comparatively rare in Britain. When they occur, as in 1981, or more recently in Bradford in 1995, there is concern to establish the causes. Bradford, once a home to Irish refugees and German industrialists, now has a sizeable population of Kashmiri Muslims. Bradford Muslims have been associated with demands for single-sex education and with the public burning of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*. Here too a generation born and brought up in Britain has views and expectations that sometimes differ from those of their parents and grandparents. – *The Times*, 12 June 1995.

Two police officers who stopped youths playing football in the street triggered two nights of rioting involving gangs of up to 400 Asian youths in the Manningham district of Bradford. Although it was a mundane police task, it quickly led to disturbances, fuelled by festering tensions among young British-born Asians and reflecting a generation gap within the Asian community.

The area was already tense after the activities of groups of Asian men trying to rid the area of prostitutes by approaching women and kerb crawlers. Residents have been infuriated by an influx of kerb crawlers since the district was featured in the television series *Band of Gold*. One community leader said: "People feel the council and police are not doing enough." He also said the relationship between the police and community had declined with allegations that some officers had used racist language when dealing with young Pakistani men.

For many people the rioting will be alarming, given the general assumption that, of all the ethnic minority groups in Britain, the Asian is the most stable, hard-working and disciplined. But within British Asian communities it has been clear for some years that the social, cultural and sexual mores that controlled the lives of an older generation were being undermined by Western values.

The traditional extended family, integral to the life of first generation Asians, is slowly giving way to the immediate family with young men enjoying a social life that centres on friends from school and work rather than family. While the first generation Pakistanis in places such as Manningham emphasise the importance of their Muslim religion in providing a moral structure to their lives, the second generation is more relaxed about its faith, alcohol and sex.

All these factors have created a widening gulf between British-born Asian youths and their elders for whom their way of life, with their interest in Bhangra music and contemporary fashion, is totally alien. Keith Hellawell, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, said: "I am sure all the cultural and religious leaders would say that they have been worried for the last ten years that the younger generation do not follow their teachings. They felt that they had great difficulty controlling them."

The gulf between the generations is also highlighted in the expectations of the Manningham youngsters who were born, brought up and educated in Britain. While their parents and grandparents were willing to accept racism, deprivation and poor job prospects, the second generation is unwilling to settle for the quiet life. One Asian youth said yesterday: "We are not the Asians who lived here 20 years ago. We are not our parents. The elders don't have a clue how the community lives."

## Vocabulary

**mundane** (adj.): ordinary, everyday - **festering** (adj.): like an infection in a wound - **kerb crawler** (n.) (BrE) a man who drives slowly along the road near the kerb looking for prostitutes **mores** (n. pl.): moral customs **Western values** the culture and morality of Western Europe, North America, Australia and similar countries **integral to** (adj.): which cannot be separated from - **chief constable** (n.): the most senior police officer in a county - **deprivation** (n.): poverty, lack of facilities or opportunities - **quiet life**: not having problems with other people or the authorities

## Explanations

Intro/ **Bradford**: city in West Yorkshire. in the North of England (with a population of about 460,000 in 1995, of whom 15.6% came from ethnic minorities). Connected with wool and textile manufacture for over 600 years, it has been affected by the rundown of traditional industries. - Intro/ **Kashmiri**: from Kashmir, a state on the North West border of India, now divided between India and Pakistan - Intro/ **burning of Salman Rushdie's book**: During worldwide protests by Muslims against Salman Rushdie for what they saw as blasphemy in *The Satanic Verses*, Muslims in Bradford burned the book publicly. The subsequent *fatwah*, or death sentence, spoken against Rushdie by the Iranian religious leader Khomeini, forced him into hiding. - **Band of Gold**: British television series about prostitutes working in the streets of Bradford, and some of the dangers they face. It resulted in a new kind of 'tourism'. - **Bhangra music**: a fusion of Asian, Caribbean and British musical styles

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1 What elements need to be present in a social situation before violence or rioting take place?

## Comprehension

2 What started the riot?

3 What had recently caused dissatisfaction with the police in the area?

4 What are the main differences between the first and second generations of the ethnic Pakistani community in Bradford, according to the article?

## Analysis

5 What is implied by the phrase "extended family" (l. 25)? What effects might the "extended family" have on everyday life?

6 The text suggests first generation Asians are worried. What factors make them dissatisfied with British society?

7 Explain what younger Asians feel dissatisfied about.

## Opinion

8 It sometimes seems that conditions do not improve for minorities until a riot happens. What lessons can be learnt from this, and how could future riots be prevented?

9 Strongly held religious opinions can have positive and negative sides. Debate this issue.

10 One serious problem in Bradford was street prostitution. Should something be done about this? What do you think?

11 Basing your information on texts 16, write a dialogue or short story about a problem arising between two generations of an Asian family (e.g. boy/girlfriends, religious observance, fashion, alcohol).