



Transnational Shift: Marriage, Home and Belonging for British-Pakistani Muslim Women

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Speaker's Profile



Robina Mohammad joined the institute of Asian Studies at UBD in January 2013. She has held positions at a number of UK based universities as well as in a geography programme at a US university. Prior to that she held a post-doc fellowship in the South Asian Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore. She is a human geography by training yet her approach also draws on anthropological and sociological lens. Her research has been conducted in Europe (UK and Spain) and the Middle East, more specifically the Gulf. A key strand of her research focuses on migration, in particular the South Asian diaspora, examining issues of difference, identity and belonging, outsider status, exclusion and marginality that have become pertinent in the Gulf as well as in Europe. In the latter there is also a certain gender politics drawn on to legitimate exclusion and outsider status of groups such as Muslims. For both European based Muslim communities and host societies gender is made the pivot on which the border is constructed.

Abstract

This research is part of a series of projects I have undertaken on Muslim and/or South Asian diasporas in the Gulf and Europe (UK) as well as developing work in South East Asia. The paper draws on an empirical study undertaken in Birmingham (the UK's 2nd largest city, home to nine percent of Britain's entire Muslim population and 16 percent of all Britain's Pakistanis). The study brings a focus on youthful, British Pakistani women to examine their negotiation of consanguineous transnational marriage that is also an important form of economic migration for men from Pakistan. These flows of grooms from rural Kashmir (Pakistan) to Birmingham challenge conventional patrilineal gender relations and hierarchy offering potential for women's empowerment within the domestic sphere. In a socio-economic and political context in which expectations of marriage are undergoing change, I draw on women's narratives to explore the negotiation of this major socio-spatial life transition and how it mediates a sense of home, identity and belonging in the process of reworking marital scripts.