

# Cultural Value

## The Cultural Value of South Asian Arts

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Arts & Humanities  
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## **Executive Summary**

This report examines the cultural value of South Asian Arts in Britain by reviewing literature about the place of South Asian Arts in Britain and their impact on individuals and society. Beginning by discussing how the place of minority ethnic arts has been articulated by funders and policy makers, the report then discusses the different types of South Asian arts in Britain. Following this, literature about the value of these art forms is explored using a framework developed by the Arts Council which examines cultural value by focusing on economic, health, societal and educational benefits.

Literature was gathered by structuring searches around four areas in particular; reports and research produced by funding bodies; annual reports and ephemera produced by South Asian Arts organisations; magazines which publish articles relating to South Asian Arts and academic research which examines the lives of South Asians themselves. In addition an online survey was developed which was advertised through social media and through the various networks created by the above engagement. As well as asking about the different types of minority ethnic events which the participants engage in, the survey examined what value was attached to this engagement.

This report demonstrates the important role played by South Asian arts both for individuals from South Asian backgrounds and for the wider public. One of its key findings is that South Asian arts plays an important role across the generations highlighting the role of culturally relevant arts for older South Asians, and allowing young South Asians new ways in which to engage with their heritage. The findings suggest that although the economic, health, societal and educational values of the arts are important, for members of minority communities the value of minority arts as a means for engaging with heritage is key. The report makes a strong case for further ethnographic research into the role and place of South Asian arts in Britain in all of its various guises.

## **Researchers and Project Partners**

Dr Jasjit Singh (Principal Investigator)

South Asian Arts organisations contacted:

Akademi  
Kala Sangam  
South Asian Arts UK  
SAMPAD

## **Key words**

Minority ethnic; Asian; ethnicity; religion; identity; community; tradition

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## Introduction

On 6th June 2014, in his very first speech as Culture Secretary, Sajid Javid reflected on his cultural experiences growing up as a British Pakistani, and of the impact of a rare family visit to the cinema as a six year old to watch the Bollywood blockbuster Sholay, an experience which left him “transfixed by this amazing spectacle unfolding on the big screen” (Javid 2014). Javid went on to observe that adults from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are less engaged in the arts than their white counterparts and are much less likely to attend a performance or visit a gallery. He further noted that BME applicants were only awarded 5.5 per cent of Grants for the Arts awards in 2013 despite making up 14 per cent of the UK’s population highlighting a lack of engagement by those from BME backgrounds with the arts. Reflecting on some of the reasons behind this he wondered if there were sufficient numbers of visible role models, if talent is being developed in the right way, and if cultural institutions are making enough efforts to reach out to ethnic minority communities. A recent study commissioned by the Arts Council to investigate policy options to help young people to enter the creative industries also found “serious under-representation of ethnic minorities in the creative industries” which was explained as a consequence of the fact that entry into the creative professions is often confined to those who have access to those in a position to get them into work in the arts (Gunnel and Bright 2010). Understanding how people from BME backgrounds engage with the arts is of increasing importance both because headlines regularly highlight a lack of representation from people with BME backgrounds in the arts,<sup>1</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> The BBC for instance recently announced new measures to improve the representation of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in broadcasting (<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jun/20/bbc-measures-diversity-lenny-henry> - accessed 20/06/2014). A recent report published by the IPPR also

because as the 2011 Census of England and Wales indicates, BME populations in Britain are increasing with the South Asian population in England now constituting five percent of the total population<sup>2</sup> and set to increase further.<sup>3</sup>

This report examines the cultural value of South Asian Arts in Britain by reviewing literature about the place of South Asian Arts in Britain and their impact on individuals and society. Beginning by discussing how the place of minority ethnic arts has been articulated by funders and policy makers, the report then discusses the different types of South Asian arts in Britain. Following this, literature about the value of these art forms is examined using a framework developed by the Arts Council which examines cultural value by focusing on the economic, health, societal and educational benefits of the arts.

A number of approaches were used to gather the necessary literature. First as the focus was on examining the role and place of South Asian arts in Britain, I began by gathering literature which examined how South Asian arts have impacted on individuals and on wider society. Searches were structured around four areas in particular; reports and research produced by funding bodies; annual reports and ephemera produced by South Asian Arts organisations; magazines which regularly publish articles relating to South Asian Arts and academic research which examines the lives of South Asians themselves. In addition media interviews with South Asian artists were also examined. This review was conducted between March and June 2014 during which I endeavoured to source as many research reports as possible although given the wealth of information available in this area inevitably some reports will have been missed suggesting the need for extended research in this area.<sup>4</sup>

In order to source the necessary research and reports I first approached academics working in the field of South Asian Arts which brought to my attention the wide variety of literature in the field including publications and magazines such as Artrage, Third Text, Wasafri and Pulse Magazine as well as academic journals including South Asian Popular Culture. Secondly I undertook face to face meetings with the Arts Council to find out about publications relating to funding of South Asian Arts in Britain. I then contacted and visited a number of the main South Asian Arts organisations across the UK including SAA-UK (Leeds), Kala Sangam (Bradford), SAMPAD (Birmingham), Akademi (London) and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (London) to gather further information about

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highlighted “low recruitment of people from non-white and less well-off backgrounds, as threats to the future competitiveness of the sector”: <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/feb/24/uk-creative-industries-regional-ethnic-diversity> - accessed 05/04/2014

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/interactive/census-3-1---ethnicity-comparison-tool/index.html> - accessed 07/05/2014. This figure (which has increased from four percent in 2001) has been calculated from the following figures; 1412958 Indians + 1124511 Pakistanis + 447201 Bangladeshis = 2984670 of a total population of 56075912. = 5%. Of this 2011 British South Asian population, approximately 47% are Indian, 38% Pakistani and 15% Bangladeshi.

<sup>3</sup> According to 'The New Britain' report, BME groups in this country will be twice as large in 30 years' time (2045) as they are today: <http://www.ipa.co.uk/news/the-new-britain--how-to-advertise-to-bmes#.U767fFFBcT5> – accessed 05/05/2014

<sup>4</sup> Many of the South Asian arts organisations I visited had extensive stores of archival materials which to date remain unexamined.

publications, research and reports into South Asian Arts. Alongside this literature I conducted searches into academic studies of South Asians and examined South Asian archives based at SADAA and the British Library.<sup>5</sup>

A third strand running alongside the analysis of literature and meetings involved the development and implementation of an online survey. This survey was advertised through social media and through the various networks created by the above engagement. As well as asking questions about the different types of minority ethnic events which the participants engage in, questions were asked about the cultural value of this engagement. The survey ran for two months between May and June 2014 and in total gathered 34 responses.<sup>6</sup>

### **From 'ethnic minority arts' to the 'creative case'**

The publication of Naseem Khan's highly influential 'The Arts Britain Ignores' in 1976 signalled the first discussion of the place of 'ethnic minority arts' which she found were "an energetic but struggling sub-culture ... which exists for the communities alone" (1976: 5) and which suffer from a lack of rehearsal premises, a lack of structural support and a lack of exposure. Khan sought to chart the types of art forms developed and supported by particular communities and to find the extent of support offered to ethnic minority cultural activities by the state (1976: 125). Though she found many at the time arguing that attempts to foster ethnic minority arts are divisive leading to the perpetuation of differences, Khan (1976: 6) felt that a separate funding allocation for 'ethnic minority arts' was necessary in order to:

1. allow 'coloured children' to learn positive aspects of what is "commonly counted a disadvantage"
2. encourage different types of arts.
3. provide new influences and experiences for those living in Britain, as ethnic arts could be "a possible source of enjoyment for all." (Khan 1976: 7)

Public funding for 'ethnic minority arts' emerged following the civil uprisings in the 1980s in Brixton which led to the development of the Arts Council's Ethnic Minorities Action Plan (Malik 2001: 18).<sup>7</sup> As Malik (2001: 19) explains, the role of local councils in boosting minority cultural activities was significant at this time, in particular that of the Greater London Council (GLC) with its Ethnic Minority Arts Committee. At the time South Asian arts were included in the category 'ethnic minority arts' and 'Black arts', terms which were regarded as being imposed "a complaint mostly registered by Asians

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<sup>5</sup> The South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive, SADAA is hosted at Brunel University and can be found online at; <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/services/library/research/special-collections/collections/sadaa> - accessed 23/03/2014 and <http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/collections/SALIDAA.html> - accessed 03/04/2014

<sup>6</sup> The survey was available at <https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/saarts>

<sup>7</sup> Before this point during the late 1970s and early 1980s diasporic dance forms were disseminated through "grass-roots amateur practices in local community halls, temples and specialist venues such as London's Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan" (Prickett 2013:6)

many of whom did not identify with the term 'Black'" (Malik 2001: 19). The establishment of the South Asian dance organisation Aditi in 1989 highlighted the growing distinction being made between Black and South Asian arts through the 1980s.

Although there was a move to promote South Asian arts at this time, Holt and Turney (2006: 330) observe that throughout the 1980s and 1990s "South Asian artists struggled to express themselves and their identity without being reducible to cliché, surface and stereotype." For Hylton (2007: 40) it was "the sentiments of Khan's thirty year old report, namely the notion of a self-referencing field of 'ethnic arts'" which led to funding initiatives supporting 'cultural diversity'. For Hylton these initiatives were unhelpful for two reasons, firstly "because they presuppose or imply normality to be white and everything else to be 'diverse'." (2007:23), and secondly because categorising artists by racial or ethnic typologies places them in a "straightjacket of conformity" which both risks crippling artistic creativity and confines them to a limited range of themes (Fisher 2010: 63).

In response to these criticisms the Arts Council presented a 'Creative case' for diversity which recognises the value of diversity and equality in helping "sustain, refresh, replenish and release the true potential of England's artistic talent, regardless of people's background" (2011: 3). This approach "takes account of the complexity of discrimination ... [where] no strand [is] ... seen as more important than any other [as] ... enshrined legally in the Equality Act 2010." (2011: 6). It is clear therefore that the way in which the state has valued minority ethnic arts has changed over the years. From promoting minority ethnic arts as community based art forms which allow members of minority communities to learn positive aspects of their culture to the current position where the value of minority arts is presented as part of a wider spectrum of diverse arts which contribute to understanding diversity of all types in mainstream society, the value placed on minority ethnic arts by funders and policy makers has clearly changed over the years supporting O'Brien's (2014: 112) assertion that the value of culture is a "complex and thoroughly political question".

## **Making sense of South Asian arts in Britain**

Having examined how minority arts have been valued by funders and policy makers, this report now explores South Asian arts in Britain. The structure of Khan's 1976 report highlights that the category 'South Asian Arts' had not developed at that time as she wrote about 'ethnic minority arts' and included separate chapters on Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani art. Writing in 1994 in his examination of South Asian music teaching in schools in London, Farrell found the term 'South Asian' being "used widely in the context of arts to mean styles of music, dance and visual arts from the Indian sub-continent, i.e. from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. It is a useful generic term for art forms that are common to all these countries" (1994:1). Scholars studying Indian dance have however critiqued the use of the term 'South Asian'. In her examination of the process by which Indian dance forms came to be labelled 'South Asian', Meduri found that in the 1980s "arts officers working in the employ of the British Arts Council, well-meaning academics, venue managers, and funding agencies were all implicated in the momentous rechristening of Indian forms as South Asian forms" (2008a: 299) turning the label

'South Asian' into "dominant institutional category when major dance organisations including Akademi, Kadam, and Sampad, funded by the Arts Council of Britain, began to use the area studies label to promote Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi in the 1990s." (2008b:224).

Speaking at a conference organised by the South Asian Dance organisation, Akademi, entitled 'No Man's Land – Exploring South Asianness' held in 2004, Andree Grau (2004:9) suggested that the term 'South Asian Dance' actually "irons out difference and foregrounds similarities. Within a diasporic context, one could argue that it also removes the dance from a notion of clear-cut lineage and a nostalgic notion of lost heritage." The implication is that this "might encourage a discourse about dance forms, like bharatanatyam, as less rooted in ethnicity and more in technique, thus rendering the form(s) transnational" (2004: 16). Meduri highlights how Mira Kaushik, the Director of Akademi dealt with the ambiguity in the Indian/South Asian label when receiving her honorary OBE (Order of the British Empire) by claiming that "although Indian dance might look Indian, it is South Asian dance in the UK because it is performed not just by immigrant dancers from India but by 'hundreds of South Asian dancers' belonging to the different nations of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India and Africa" (2008b: 238). For the purposes of this review, 'South Asian arts' will be used to refer to the many art forms which originate in the Indian subcontinent, which are now performed by and engaged with by individuals from any number of diverse backgrounds.

A number of distinctions can be made between the different types of art forms originating in the Indian subcontinent, one being between Marghi and Desi traditions. Marghi (lit 'on the path') traditions are highly formalised, often based on ancient texts and are passed down from a Guru (teacher) to a shishya (student) whereas Desi arts are more localised traditions which develop in local contexts (Royo n.d).<sup>8</sup> A similar distinction is described by Farrell (2005:117) who explains that for South Asian music "a conceptual divide has long existed between classical and folk music. This is expressed by the terms shastriya sangit (classical) and lok sangit (folk) ... [although] ... these terms and their particular meanings in Indian aesthetics cannot be easily transferred as reference points for analysis of South Asian music in contemporary Britain." Within 'Marghi' or classical arts forms, a further distinction can be made between Hindustani and Carnatic traditions. As Farrell et al (2005:110) explain "the Hindustani tradition is found across the whole of the northern part of the Sub-continent, encompassing Pakistan, North India and Bangladesh ... in contrast, the Southern or Carnatic system of Indian music is practised mainly in an area from Central India to the south, including Sri Lanka."

The development of the South Asian Arts scene in Britain has been mapped in a number of studies over the years including Farrell et al's (1994, 1999, 2005) examinations of South Asian music in Britain in which they found that "South Asian music in Britain is a music of homes, schools, community centres, temples, cinemas, recording studios,

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<sup>8</sup> What counts as a Marghi and as a Desi tradition depends on interpretation. For Iyer (1997: 7) the classical styles of South Asian dance such as Bharatanatyam are well established 'marghi' art forms with British South Asian dance taking its place as a 'desi' art form.

clubs, stadia, websites – it does not have one stylistic identity, but many” (2005: 105). Farrell describes how in the Indian classical music scene in the UK, the Hindustani (North Indian) style is dominant reflecting the high number of members of British South Asian communities with North Indian origins, whereas Carnatic (South Indian) music and dance are concentrated in Greater London amongst Tamil-speaking South Indians and Sri Lankans (Farrell et al. 2005: 110–11). In terms of desi traditions which have evolved in Britain, by far the most studied South Asian music scene is that of Bhangra,<sup>9</sup> which emerged in the mid-1980s (Banerji 1988; Baumann 1990; Bennett 1997; Dudrah 2002; Hyder 2004; Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma 1996) and which developed a number of 'regional' identities in association with different music scenes and local South Asian communities in British cities; for example, in Southall, London (Baumann 1990), the midlands city of Birmingham (Dudrah 2007), or north- eastern city of Newcastle (Bennett 1997). More recent studies have examined the emergence of Asian Underground music (Kalra 1996, Alexander and Kim 2013) with London again the main locale for the emergence of this scene.<sup>10</sup>

In their examination of the emergence of South Asian Dance in Britain, Kaur and Terracciano describe how there were very few outlets for performance in the early days (pre 1970s) when dancers would perform for invited guests in private concerts in their homes (Khan et al., 2000: 1) and where music and dance classes would also be held in houses. This changed following the development in the 1970s of community-specific, culture-focused institutions including the first overseas branch of the Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan in London in 1972. By the 1980s a number of South Asian dance organisations including Akademi (formerly the Academy of Indian Dance) established in 1979, SAMPAD (established in 1990) and based in Birmingham, AdiTi a national organisation for South Asian dance in Britain (established in 1989 and now dissolved), and Kadam, a Bedford based development agency for South Asian dance (established in 1990) had emerged in response to funding opportunities. As well as these South Asian music and dance organisations, Hingorani (2010) describes the establishment of British South Asian theatre organisations from the 1970s onwards with a particular focus on Tara Arts (established in 1977), Tamasha (established in 1989) and the Kali Theatre Company (established in 1991). Many of these organisations subsequently became Arts Council 'Regularly Funded Organisations' with a number recently receiving funding until 2018 as 'National Portfolio Organisations' as announced on July 1st 2014 (see Appendix A).<sup>11</sup> A

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<sup>9</sup> Oliver (1990: 137) describes Bhangra as the fusion of a rural Punjabi dance with the production strategies of disco music and pop

<sup>10</sup> Other studies include Baily's (1990, 1995) examination of Qawwali music in British Muslim communities highlights how “the Muslim concept of what constitutes 'music' differs in some ways from the European [where] music is classified as the product of playing musical instruments ... while unaccompanied singing is not defined as 'music'. ”(1990: 154).

<sup>11</sup> Grau (2001) highlights that there is much diversity in the approach to South Asian arts among many of these organisations. She notes that although Akademi and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan were established in London in the 1970s along similar lines, by the early 2000s Akademi's director Mira Kaushik viewed Akademi as a 'silent laboratory within which South Asian dancers have experimented and stretched the boundaries of their dance forms within a contemporary social, educational and artistic context' whereas Bhavan continues to stress its role of 'educating people in Britain about the Indian community, and helping Indians to put down roots in their

number of other South Asian Arts organisations exist nationally which do not have Arts Council NPO status but which have on occasion obtained funding from local councils (see Appendix B).

In their 'South Asian Musics, Cultures and Communities in Newcastle upon Tyne' report Clarke and Hodgson (2012:7) distinguish between 'public facing' organisations and 'community facing' South Asian arts organisations. They define 'public facing' organisations as those which are funded principally by public money and/or sponsorship, are accountable to public bodies (e.g. local authorities, funding councils) and are not bound to the communities with which they engage and serve. In contrast, 'community facing' organisations are primarily privately funded by individuals having emerged from communities, are orientated primarily towards the cultural needs or aspirations of a particular community where making connections with other communities or with a wider community is not necessarily a priority. Although both public facing and community facing South Asian arts organisations have been established in Britain since the 1970s to date there have been few studies conducted on their impact and role and their contribution to individuals and society. In order to structure this examination of the cultural value of South Asian arts in Britain, this report will now use the four themes outlined in the Arts Council's (2014) most recent report 'The value of arts and culture to people and society – an evidence review' examining the economic value of South Asian arts, their benefit to health and wellbeing, their impact on society and their role in education.

### **The economic value of South Asian arts**

For O'Brien (2010:20) "the question of valuing culture becomes how best to make the case for culture within the framework of central government decision-making". As existing economic valuation techniques are currently the only ones supported by the Green Book, the HM treasury's guidance on committing public funds to a policy, programme or project, O'Brien concludes that for policy makers cultural value must be measured in economic terms.<sup>12</sup> Although a number of studies have examined the economic impact of the arts (Radich 1987, Reeves 2002, Seaman 2003) few have focused on South Asian arts. This section explores the economic value of South Asian arts in Britain by examining how their presence contributes to local economies. According to a Local Government Association (2013) report, local investment in arts and culture can impact on local economies and economic growth by attracting visitors, creating jobs and developing skills, attracting and retaining businesses and revitalising places and developing talent. In terms of attracting visitors, by far the largest South Asian events held in Britain are the annual summer melas with the Birmingham mela attracting 125,000 visitors in its first year, the London mela attracting an audience of

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new home without sacrificing their heritage' celebrating major Indian festivals (still primarily Hindu), and hosting regular concerts given by resident and visiting Asian artists.

<sup>12</sup> The need to demonstrate the economic value of culture was also recently highlighted by Bakshi (2012) who argued that if cultural organisations require state funding "they must demonstrate value on the state's terms, which naturally includes the economic." Similarly, in a speech in 2013, the then culture secretary Maria Miller told arts executives that they must "hammer home the value of culture to our economy" (BBC, 2013).

over 80,000, the 'Manchester Mega mela' attracting over 60,000 attendees and the Southampton mela attracting 20,000 people.<sup>13</sup> These large events become key dates in the cultural calendars of the cities in which they are held boosting local economies with large numbers of visitors as Ben Pugh, the producer of the Bradford mela explains:

“the Bradford Mela generates over £7 million worth of spend. When you look at that, and you look at the positive impact on economic indicators and the impact on tourism and profile and community cohesion and safer stronger communities, Bradford Mela ticks off against corporate priorities across the board.” (Qureshi 2010:100)

From primarily being celebrations of 'South Asian' culture, melas are now recognised as multi-arts festivals drawing in huge crowds from diverse communities (Qureshi 2010: 96).<sup>14</sup> In their study of the economic and social impact of eleven festivals in the East Midlands, Maughan and Bianchini (2004) included the Leicester Belgrave mela, a two day Asian cultural and social event established in 1983. They found the Leicester mela attracted the largest overall audience of the eleven festivals examined with approximately 100,000 attendees (2004: 4) and observed a clear link between ethnicity and attendance with most non-white festival goers only attending the Leicester Belgrave mela and the Derby Caribbean Carnival. Including these two festivals they found those belonging to Asian or Asian British ethnic groups making up 11.2% of audiences, while representing 4% of the region's population. Excluding these festivals, the Asian percentage declined to 1.4% suggesting “a strong need for festivals to broaden their appeal to Asian and Black audiences” (2004: 9).<sup>15</sup> They also found that the mela audience tended to state that they would probably choose to attend other South Asian events including the Birmingham mela and Bradford mela when asked which other festivals they attend (2004: 112).

Melas also attract sponsorship from both mainstream and South Asian companies looking to appeal to minority ethnic audiences including KTC, Savera, Noon Products, Rubicon, Supermalt, Western Union, Pataks, Sharwoods, East End Foods, Tilda, Sahara, British Airways, Kingfisher, Cobra, Khukuri, Virgin Media, Zee TV and Sony TV Asia companies which would rarely invest in more mainstream arts.<sup>16</sup> Melas also allow health practitioners to engage with South Asians on common issues relating to health and

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<sup>13</sup> For details about the Birmingham mela see: <http://www.birminghammela.com/about-birmingham-mela/>, for the London mela see <http://www.londonmela.org/>, for the Manchester Mega mela see: [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/6388/manchester\\_mega\\_mela\\_returns\\_to\\_manchester](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/6388/manchester_mega_mela_returns_to_manchester) and for the Southampton mela see: <http://artasia.org.uk/highlight-6/> - all accessed 05/06/2014

<sup>14</sup> Although as Hodgson (2014: 208) found these events need to ensure that they reflect a variety of diverse traditions in order to maintain their appeal or risk becoming 'mono-cultural' as in the case of the Bradford mela between 2009/2010.

<sup>15</sup> They found only two festivals employing anyone from the African Caribbean or Asian communities, these being Derby Caribbean Carnival and Leicester Belgrave mela. In terms of local impact they found that Leicester Belgrave mela appointed an Arts Development Officer fulltime for one year in 2003 but it was not clear if this contract would be extended beyond this.

<sup>16</sup> For details of past and current mela sponsors see <http://www.londonmela.org/sponsorship/> and <http://www.manchestermela.co.uk/sponsors.htm> - both accessed 05/06/2014

wellbeing.<sup>17</sup> Given the increase in the size of the various communities which make up the South Asian population in Britain, it is not surprising to find increasing numbers of melas being organised along religious or community lines including the Northern Sikh mela in Huddersfield, the Boishakhi mela in Tower Hamlets targeting the Bangladeshi community and the Eid mela being organised for the Muslim population of Birmingham.<sup>18</sup>

As well as assisting in the provision of artists and performances to melas<sup>19</sup> the contribution of South Asian arts organisations is regularly highlighted in studies of local cultural provision.<sup>20</sup> Given that the majority of 'public facing' South Asian arts organisations operate as charities, many of the annual reports for the charity commission highlight the economic contribution being made. Akademi for instance describe how they contributed to a number of public events contributing to the Big Dance and the London Indian Film Festival.<sup>21</sup> It is also clear that the presence and influence of well established South Asian arts organisations filters across into communities with smaller South Asian populations with the Asian Art Agency based in Bristol helping South Asian communities in Swindon and Plymouth develop their own events<sup>22</sup> and Holt and Turney (2006: 338) observing how Shisha's ArtSouthAsia project, the first international programme of visual culture from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in July 2002 led to "the North West cities of Oldham, Preston, Liverpool and Manchester ... [seeing] significant events and exhibitions curated by individuals from each of the contributing countries".

Many of the events organised by 'community facing' organisations are relatively hidden events often advertised within community networks and usually taking place in venues owned or run by members of minority ethnic communities including religious institutions and cultural centres. Consequently there has been little research into their economic impact. Indeed, the Arts Council found that "there is little research regarding the economic impact of grassroots and amateur organisations; however their contribution to the local and national economies cannot be ignored" (Arts Council 2014). Although

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<sup>17</sup> For instance Hepatitis C screening was carried out at Edinburgh mela in 2012 (<http://www.hepctrust.org.uk/Resources/HepC%20New/Hep%20C%20Resources/Media/Edinburgh%20Mela%20Screening%20Van%20Sept%202012.pdf> – accessed 08/07/2014). Those researching health issues in South Asian communities often use melas to gather respondent data, for example Matthews et al (2007

<sup>18</sup> For details about the Northern Sikh mela, see <http://www.examiner.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/sun-shines-thousands-visitors-sikh-5788241> for the Boishakhi mela see <http://boishakhimela.org> and for the Eid mela see <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/eidmela> - all accessed 08/07/2014

<sup>19</sup> Examples include Kala Sangam and South Asian Arts UK contribution to the Bradford mela (Qureshi 2010: 48), Akademi's contribution to the London mela and Art Asia's contribution to the Southampton mela

<sup>20</sup> The study of the Economic value of Birmingham's cultural sector and the examination of The Creative & Digital Industries in Leeds for instance provide little data on how South Asian Arts specifically contribute to local economies.

<sup>21</sup> See Akademi's Annual report from 2012 available at:

[http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends49%5C0001107249\\_AC\\_20120331\\_E\\_C.pdf](http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends49%5C0001107249_AC_20120331_E_C.pdf) – accessed 06/04/2014

<sup>22</sup> See the Asian Arts Agency Annual report from 2013 available at:

[http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends29%5C0001086229\\_AC\\_20130331\\_E\\_C.pdf](http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends29%5C0001086229_AC_20130331_E_C.pdf) – accessed 07/04/2014

Voluntary Arts England estimate that there were 49,000 grass roots or amateur arts organisations in England in 2009<sup>23</sup> often run by unpaid staff (Ramsden et al, 2011) it is unlikely that this number includes South Asian community facing organisations which although providing examples of grassroots arts, rarely label themselves specifically as arts organisations. Further research is certainly required on the range and scope of minority ethnic grassroots organisations, what they offer in terms of engagement with the arts and their impact on local economies.

### **The contribution of South Asian arts to health and wellbeing**

In their review of research into the impact of the arts on health and wellbeing the Arts Council note that “participants are attracted to and demonstrate higher levels of commitment to activities that are culturally relevant to them” (2014:30). In this regard a number of South Asian arts organisations provide culturally relevant activities to improve the health and wellbeing of those who may not otherwise engage in arts activities. In a report exploring best practice for community dance with older adults, Sarker (n.d) highlighted the value of Akademi’s culturally diverse dance provision for older people. Working with the Bengali Worker’s Association (BWA) in Camden and the Nexos Latinoamericanos Dance Company she describes how Akademi developed a regular dance programme by promoting dance as a creative physical activity for the 29 out of 30 older adult Bengali women (Sarker, n.d: 8) many of whom had previously “felt that they were unable to engage in dance and the arts for cultural and religious reasons”. Furthermore although the majority of these women did not participate in any social dance due to their religious beliefs, some of the older women in the group were interested in performing “Dhamail” (a harvest dance) having seen women perform this dance in their villages in their childhood. Those participating viewed the programme as having improved their mental and physical wellbeing as well as providing a number of opportunities for social interaction (Sarker, n.d: 44).

Other South Asian arts programmes promoting Health and Wellbeing include SAA-UK’s ‘Khushi project’ in partnership with the Hamara Healthy Living Centre which looked to stimulate open debate and discussion about mental health problems in the South Asian community in Yorkshire<sup>24</sup>, Kala Sangam’s ‘Kala Sukoon’ programme providing artistic activities to groups at risk of or suffering from mental illness and ‘Oakbank Drama Project’ (South 2004) helping young South Asian women to explore issues around marriage and mental and sexual health. Sampad’s Antenatal Music and Movement project for Asian women (Arts Council, 2007:38) ran over 18 months during 2001 and 2002 in areas of Birmingham and Walsall where there was a low uptake of antenatal care from women from “more closed Asian communities ... [where] English is often a second language and there is resistance to attending any classes for preparation for

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcmds/464/464vw117.htm> - accessed 25/04/2014

<sup>24</sup> This programme was funded by a ‘Time to Change’ grant. For further details see: <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/grants/yorkshire-and-humber-and-the-north-east#hamara> and <http://www.asianexpress.co.uk/2014/04/khushi-dil-ki-baatein/> - both accessed 05/06/2014

birth, and also a high infant mortality rate amongst non-English speakers” (Durdey 2006).<sup>25</sup>

Reflecting on the 'Engaging with all our elders: Hamaray khawab/Our Dreams' project run for elderly South Asians in Bolton in conjunction with the Asian Elders Initiative (AEI), Chris Sudworth of the Octagon Theatre evaluated the project as

an unqualified success. The Gujarati ladies had dance as a part of their culture, but they enjoyed these workshops because it was something different to their community garba steps ... also, there were several Muslim ladies who participated from their chairs, simply treating the hand movements the group had developed with their stories as 'exercise to music' rather than 'performance'. The group took more and more control as the weeks progressed (Sudworth 2004)

Reporting on the work of dance instructor Vina Ladwa in Nottingham Binder (2014) observes how South Asian Dance can help elderly women from all backgrounds with their health and wellbeing, providing new experiences to white British older people through exposure to new types of music, and in demonstrating how stories which they have not heard before.<sup>26</sup> Another very recent example is that of the Liverpool based South Asian dance organisation, Chaturangan who performed a dementia friendly performance in August 2014.<sup>27</sup> Many of these events appeal to members of South Asian communities who do not have a strong command of English and who may not therefore feel confident to engage with health professionals.

Other popular events organised by community facing organisations include “Kavi Darbars” (poetry symposiums) regularly organised in community venues across the country including Nottingham, Hounslow, Derby and Kent<sup>28</sup>. Disseminating my doctoral research findings at the Bradford Kavi Darbar organised by BECAS (Bradford Educational and Cultural Association of Sikhs) helped me appreciate how this event provides a platform for older South Asians to write and publically present poetry and also highlighted that many community arts events are not billed as such and may not always

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<sup>25</sup> The artists used South Asian lullabies and traditional songs with actions which stimulated memories about the participants’ mothers, childhood, and connections with family (2006: 14). In total 60 women attended the sessions, which included the singing of lullabies and other children’s songs in the women’s first language – eg Punjabi, Urdu or Gujarati.

<sup>26</sup> Other examples where South Asian arts are being used to improve health and wellbeing include Manasamitra (Huddesfield) running South Asian arts sessions for people with disabilities. <http://www.examiner.co.uk/news/local-news/south-asian-arts-sessions-people-4938238> -accessed 06/07/2014

<sup>27</sup> For further details see: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/fleeting-moments-lift-spirits-people-dementia/> - accessed 12/08/2014

<sup>28</sup> Further details about the Kavi Darbars can be found here: <http://www.nottinghampost.com/Recitals-talks-poetry-event/story-19720780-detail/story.html> (Nottingham), <http://www.sgss.org/Newsreel.aspx?month=4&year=2012> (Hounslow), <http://www.writingeastmidlands.co.uk/events/kavi-darbar-poetry-evening/> (Derby), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOXi-KiTAMc> (Kent) – all accessed 15/06/2014. The practice of writing poetry is encouraged by the fact that according to Sikh tradition, the court of tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh hosted 52 poets (Fenech et al 2014: 62)

take place in mainstream 'arts spaces'. Singh and Tatla (2006:197) highlight the importance of the Punjabi literature scene and note its position as an ethnic product. The fact that these arts events often take place as community/religious events has important implications for the study of these communities and cultural value more generally as many of these events can be included in the category of 'community events' outlined by Khan in her report of 1976.

Other community facing examples include the work of the Pakistan Cultural Society (PCS) based in Newcastle who started a twice-weekly wellbeing group to sensitively address 'real issues' affecting the Asian community by delivering a physical and educational programme to help combat such health conditions as obesity, depression, cholesterol problems and heart disease. The attendees were mainly 40-75 year old housewives who "have little chance to socialise and have limited opportunities to exercise."<sup>29</sup> Despite the popular idea that Muslims do not engage with music, an analysis of some of the events taking place in Pakistani and Bangladeshi community centres highlights a number of music related events being organised for members of these communities with Miraj organising a Pothwari folk singer event at the Pakistan Community Centre in Reading<sup>30</sup> and the Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance organising a 'Drum and Dhol' project "for young people from the Pakistani and the African Caribbean communities to learn together their respective traditional musical instruments and to develop a cultural bond."<sup>31</sup> It is clear therefore that for some British South Asians, culturally specific South Asian arts can act as a catalyst to engage in ways to improve their health and wellbeing. As there have been few studies of South Asian community organisations and of the impact of locality on the types of events which are hosted further research is required to understand how ethnicity, religious affiliation and locality impact on engagement with South Asian arts.

## **The societal value of South Asian arts**

Research into South Asian communities has highlighted the role the arts and music can play as markers of collective identity and in challenging common perceptions (Um 2012, Clarke and Hodgson 2012). For Clarke and Hodgson (2012:2) South Asian music and the arts can "represent further different places from which multiculturalism might be experienced and understood" helping individuals and communities to articulate their identities, to experience and affirm their cultures, to raise the profile of their cultures to wider audiences and to promote or affirm cultural confidence which may also improve cultural well-being (2012: 7). According to Nagle (2011: 157) the need for members of minority groups to be able to affirm cultural confidence comes from the fact that multicultural policy has left many second-generation youth "marginalized in society and lacking the self-esteem required to build bridges with other groups". Indeed, it was

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<sup>29</sup> For further details see <http://www.ethnicnow.com/channels/health-lifestyle/press-release/12/2731/community-wellbeing-project-proves-to-be-a-life-changing-experience-for-north-east-women%E2%80%A6.html> – accessed 15/04/2014

<sup>30</sup> For further details see: <http://rg.miraj.co.uk/2014/06/pothwari-sher-folk-songs-with-rajabid-hussain-at-pcc/> - accessed 16/06/2014

<sup>31</sup> As described here: <http://www.hpca.org.uk/projects.php> - accessed 16/06/2014

suggested following the 'race riots' of the 1980s that if young members of minority groups could gain greater awareness of their 'ethnic heritage' as well as the cultures of other groups they would gain greater confidence in their identity negating the need to turn to violence in order to express themselves (Nagle 2011: 156-157).

Many of the online survey respondents highlighted the importance of their ethnic heritage with a 23 year old female from Leeds stating that it gave her "a sense of grounding, belonging, identity and confidence", a 41 year old female from Leicester viewing it as something which "defines you as a person ... gives you your identity and sense of belonging" and a 19 year old male from Bradford explaining how connecting "with the culture, values and knowledge of my ancestors is equally as important as learning the ones in the place I am born." This link was also observed by David who found Bollywood dance classes appealing to audiences of Asian ethnicity (2010: 217).

Respondents also highlighted how participation in South Asian arts had played an important role in building their self-esteem and self-confidence, with a 35 year old white female from Wolverhampton explaining how she had "made new friends, learned about another culture, increased my confidence and learned new skills" through her participation in Kathak. A 20 year old female from Birmingham felt that participation in South Asian arts had helped her "to understand my place in a diasporic South Asian community" and a 23 year old female from Leeds explained that she would be "lost without it. It has taught me discipline, respect, knowledge and much more that I know I couldn't have learnt any other way than through music and my gurus." The idea that engaging in the arts can help individuals to make sense of their place in the world has also been highlighted by Nitin Sawhney explaining how he used music following his experiences of racism growing up a South Asian in Britain:

"every time I be walking home from school and there'd be these national front guys in in a van following me with a loud hailer chanting racist abuse and that that drove me to my bedroom said to just sit there and play music on my own to try and find my own perception of who I was and to change the perception of who I was from this sense of an inferiority complex."<sup>32</sup>

The role played by South Asian Arts organisations in presenting young South Asians with positive examples of South Asian culture was also highlighted by Shahaa Kakar the first chief executive of SAA UK:

Growing up in Vancouver, my only experience of being Asian was a racist experience, it was something negative ... SAA-UK is empowering people by allowing them to explore their culture in a positive way and making it available to other people at the same time.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The full TEDx lecture can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXFBW-MllmA> – accessed 05/04/2014

<sup>33</sup> See <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/features/east-meets-west-as-cultural-heritage-takes-pride-of-place-1-2367542> - accessed 16/04/2014

Engagement in South Asian arts may also encourage members of BME communities to pursue careers in the arts/creative industries, an area in which they are severely underrepresented.<sup>34</sup> A 23 year old female from Leeds explained that she "can't see myself being honestly interested or satisfied in anything else. I want to be involved in the creative industries, especially arts, heritage and culture and preferably with a focus on South Asia." One respondent however recognised that the sector was "not well paid, difficult to get into" and another explained that he was not interested in a career in the creative industries as he learnt an instrument "as an escape from the professional life." As well as encouraging South Asians into the creative industries, Prickett (2004: 18) notes that the inclusion of South Asian dance forms in the ISTD's (the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing) dance qualifications "enhances their accessibility for those without a South Asian heritage." In filling gaps created by the absence of South Asian literature and music in mainstream British society and in school curricula she argues that South Asian arts offer potential for a more comprehensive understanding of Britain's multicultural foundations.

South Asian arts also strengthen social relations and interactions with *melas* for instance "drawing in multiple, diverse and intergenerational communities ... within a shared atmosphere of celebration" (Qureshi 2010: 7) and acting as "unique spaces for communities to make connections with different aspects of their city" (Qureshi 2010: 30). For Hingorani (2010:191) South Asian theatre plays an important role in postcolonial Britain because not only does it for inscribe 'difference' on the British stage but it also contests "homogeneous constructions of national cultural identity." South Asian visual arts exhibitions can also challenge stereotypes, as Poovaya-Smith and Hashmi explain regarding the 'Intelligent Rebellion: Women Artists of Pakistan exhibition' which they curated in 1985. They explain how this exhibition overturned "a number of stereotypes that the West may have, about contemporary art practised in a Muslim country." (Poovaya-Smith and Hashmi, 1997)

South Asian arts events and organisations also appeal to audiences who may not otherwise attend arts events. Jermyn and Desai (2000) found that members of minority ethnic groups often regard mainstream arts as elitist and focused towards those who are over the age of 35 and white. Further data on minority engagement in the arts in the 'Focus on cultural diversity' report (2003) published by the ONS based on a survey of over 1500 BME respondents, reported that 88% of women in the Indian sample had attended an arts event in the past year compared with 77% of men (2003: 30) although it is not clear what sorts of events they attended. In their examination of local authority arts events and the South Asian community in Blackburn, Syson and Wood (2006: 246) examined why the Blackburn South Asian community attended the annual *mela* in high numbers but were reluctant to attend other local authority arts and leisure events (Arts and Leisure Department, BDBC, 2003) again finding a link between ethnicity and participation in the arts. Given this link it is probable that any reported high level of

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<sup>34</sup> A recent report highlighted how despite over 50% of Londoners coming from a BAME background, the proportion of people from non-white backgrounds working in the creative industries is half of what it is across the rest of the economy. For further details see: <http://creativitydiversitynetwork.com/resource/a-strategy-for-change/> - accessed 19/05/2014

engagement in the arts by members of minority communities mostly takes place with minority ethnic arts and in venues away from the mainstream.<sup>35</sup> In terms of their impact on society therefore, South Asian arts can play an important role in allowing members of minority communities new ways in which to engage with their heritage. It also allows those from non-South Asian backgrounds the opportunity to learn about new arts forms through large scale events such as melas, or through smaller scale events including South Asian music summer schools. The role of the arts in religious and cultural transmission and its impact on identity is certainly an area which requires further research.

### **South Asian arts and education**

Many South Asian arts organisations highlight the role that South Asian arts can play in educating wider society in South Asian art forms and in encouraging the public “to reassess and challenge its view of South Asian dance and preconceptions of South Asia as a whole.”<sup>36</sup> The SAA-UK annual report for example highlights the role played by South Asian arts organisations in exposing those who have not encountered South Asian arts before to new art forms with one attendee explaining “this was my first Indian Classical Music concert ... a master class into the world of the Santoor and the Tabla”.<sup>37</sup> As well as presenting South Asian arts to the general public a number of these organisations also work with schools, with Clarke (2012: 13) noting how Saarang’s work with primary schools in Newcastle brings “experiences of South Asian and other world cultures to largely ethnically unmixed areas such as rural County Durham”. Learning South Asian arts also exposes non South Asians to new learning experiences with Clarke and Hodgson describing how the predominantly white students of Hindustani classical music at Newcastle University learn from expert musicians from the Indian subcontinent and find that learning in this way “has meant an encounter with another culture grounded in a lived relationship with their teachers” (2012:14). Indeed, students of any background who learn Marghi traditions through the guru-disciple tradition are opening themselves up to new educational experiences as learning to play Indian classical musical instruments for instance would traditionally only have been open to members of musical families.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The issue of a lack of BME engagement in the arts does not appear to have gone away. In a presentation at a conference on The Creative Case for Diversity in Britain (2011), Dr Victoria Walsh argued that cultural policy “is reluctant to abandon the politics of identity and representation as the historic basis for progressive cultural engagement”. She also critiqued many of the initiatives which have been undertaken by the cultural sector and noted that “despite over a decade of substantial dedicated funding and activity framed by policies of ‘cultural diversity’ no significant increase in visits to the art museum by ‘minority’ audiences had been realised.”

<sup>36</sup> See Akademi’s Annual report from 2013 available at: [http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends49%5C0001107249\\_AC\\_20130331\\_E\\_C.pdf](http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends49%5C0001107249_AC_20130331_E_C.pdf) – accessed 18/05/2014

<sup>37</sup> SAA-UK Annual Report 2007/08, page 13. Available at: [http://www.saa-uk.org/documents/Annual\\_Report\\_2007-08.pdf](http://www.saa-uk.org/documents/Annual_Report_2007-08.pdf) – accessed 18/05/2014

<sup>38</sup> For example, Roopa Panesar an internationally renowned sitar player “admits her family background is very different to many Indian musicians, where musicianship often runs in families and famous dynasties go back

Learning South Asian arts can also act as an important method of religious and cultural transmission, with David (2012: 90) finding Bharatanatyam classes being used by British Gujaratis and Tamils to teach their children about Indian culture.<sup>39</sup> In Leeds, SAA-UK have implemented classes to teach Sikh women traditional wedding songs which would otherwise have been passed down from generation to generation but which have somehow become lost in the frantic process of migration in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>40</sup> In September 2007 SAA-UK was contacted by the Hull and East Riding Hindu Cultural Association to design, support and deliver music and dance classes in Hull, indicating that recent first generation Indian migrants themselves wanted classes to teach their children about South Asian arts.

As formal structures have not yet been developed for the teaching of Indian classical music in Britain Farrell et al (2005: 117) note that among second and third-generation South Asian musicians in Britain knowledge of, or training in, classical music is not the norm and therefore “musical learning takes place at the interface of a number of formal and informal learning situations: within the community, at religious worship, in schools, colleges and adult education centres, in clubs and recording studios.” (Farrell et al. 2005: 117). An important role which South Asian arts organisations can play is to equip South Asian artists with the skills they need to break in to the mainstream, or at least to become role models and teachers for younger artists<sup>41</sup> so helping to address some of the concerns about there being a lack of South Asian role models.

## Conclusions and areas for further research

This review has demonstrated that South Asian Arts in Britain play an important role both for individuals and for society. It has been shown that the value placed on minority ethnic arts by funders and policymakers has changed over the years from being promoted as community based art forms allowing members of minority communities to engage with positive aspects of their culture to the current position where minority arts are seen as part of a wider contribution to creativity. The labelling of minority art forms has also been highlighted as an issue of concern for those participating, with labels often being imposed by funders and policy makers. The term ‘South Asian arts’ for instance has been shown to refer primarily to art forms of Indian origin, although this situation appears to be changing as South Asian arts organisations develop ways of engaging with and promoting art forms which appeal to members of all South Asian communities including Pakistani and Bangladeshi arts.

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decades and even centuries.” For further details see: <http://www.mancunianmatters.co.uk/content/0806622-you-know-sitar-now-meet-rest-indian-classical-music-uk> – accessed 11/06/2014

<sup>39</sup> Katrak (2004: 5) argues these learning these dance forms is als a way to “inculcate and instil certain traditional values about womanhood and the conventionally acceptable roles of wife and mother.”

<sup>40</sup> For further details see: [http://www.saa-uk.org/education\\_indianfolk.php](http://www.saa-uk.org/education_indianfolk.php) -accessed 05/07/2014

<sup>41</sup> For instance Jasdeep Singh Degun from Leeds who has performed in a number of high profile venues such as the Queen Elizabeth hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, the Manchester Bridgewater and many more. Jasdeep has also collaborated with many orchestras such as the National Youth Orchestra and Aldeburgh Young Musicians and also took part in a BBC2 Documentary and performed at Buckingham Palace for HRH Prince Harry as part of Goldie’s Band (<http://www.saa-uk.org/artist/jasdeep-degun>). He recently performed as part of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/news/newsitem93970.html>

The role of different types of South Asian arts organisations has also been highlighted with 'public facing' organisations helping develop new talent, providing opportunities for South Asian students to learn about art forms linked to their heritage and also opening up South Asian arts to new audiences. 'Community facing' South Asian arts organisations also play an important role in organising events which may not be labelled as arts events but which play an important role for those South Asians who may not feel comfortable in engaging in more mainstream events. Melas have been shown to play an important role in allowing those from non-South Asian backgrounds to experience South Asian arts.

Examining the cultural value of South Asian arts using the four measures of their impact on the economy, on health and wellbeing, on society and on education has highlighted that the arts can play an important role in engaging those older South Asians who might be less likely to participate in arts activities and also in presenting younger South Asians with new ways in which to engage with their heritage. Whereas it has been shown that some South Asian artists may not wish to be pigeonholed as purely 'South Asian', others wish to engage with South Asian arts because it provides them with a link to their tradition and heritage. For Sarot (2001) and Sztompka (1993), this link to tradition can play an important role for individuals providing:

1. **Resources** – tradition can provide individuals with blueprints for action, role-models to be emulated, and visions of social institutions and organizations.
2. **Legitimization** – traditions allow individuals to argue that 'things have always been like this', providing legitimization to existing ways of life, institutions, creeds and codes (Sztompka 1993: 64).
3. **Order** - traditions allow individuals "to perceive order in an environment that might otherwise appear chaotic ... [providing] a measure of meaning and stability" (Gracia 2003: 12).
4. **Guidance** - traditions provide individuals with guidelines for acting or conventions of behaviour in an increasingly pluralistic world (Sarot 2001: 25).
5. **Identity** - by following a tradition individuals are able to make claims about their identities presenting themselves as people whose behaviour can be trusted and predicted. Traditions also provide symbols of collective identity such as anthems, flags, emblems, and mythology which often serve to reinvigorate loyalties to nations and communities (Sztompka 1993: 65).

Although Khan's original 1976 report has been critiqued for characterising minority ethnic arts as community art forms, the idea that minority arts must be supported remains. They should however be supported as important aspects of the mainstream arts environment in Britain. Indeed, given that Khan (1976:8-9) observed that "many of the cultural activities supported by, say, the Arts Council – from opera to experimental music – are minority tastes, effectively inaccessible to large sections of the community" and given that opera could therefore be described as a minority ethnic art form, all arts organisations should be encouraged to develop innovative ways to enable individuals

from all backgrounds to engage with the art forms they offer. This could for instance take the form of providing translations in English during performances of Punjabi poetry allowing non-Punjabi speakers (including young British Punjabis) the opportunity to understand some of the issues being expressed by their elders through their poetry.

For most individuals learning South Asian arts the cultural value of these arts is not measured in the economic or societal impact, rather it is the lived experience of developing a close relationship with a teacher and actively participating in an art and which relates to one's own cultural heritage which is important. To understand the cultural value of South Asian arts therefore, as well as measuring its value in terms of its outputs and outcomes it is necessary to examine the lived experience of participation in these arts. The way in which the state and funding bodies present the value of minority arts conveys their status to members of these communities as Parekh explains:

"Acts of racism, racial violence, racial prejudice and abuse do not exist in a vacuum. They are not isolated incidents or individual acts, removed from the cultural fabric of our lives. Notions of cultural value, belonging and worth are defined and fixed by the decisions we make about what is or is not culture, and how we are represented (or not) by cultural institutions." (The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000:159)

Beyond the four measures of cultural value employed in this report therefore, for members of minority groups the value of the arts in providing new ways in which to engage with their heritage which appears to be particularly relevant for young adult members of minority communities. A number of scholars have examined the ethnic and religious identities of young adult members of South Asian communities in Britain<sup>42</sup> and have found that for many religious identity has a stronger appeal than ethnicity firstly because "while religious commitment expresses one's acceptance of a set of absolute truths ... ethnic identity is not much more than loyalty to disparate customs from a distant place" (1997: 240) and secondly because the choosing of a religious identity over an ethnic identity allows young South Asians to present themselves using an "authentic, workable, identity that is easy to comprehend" (2000: 551). By learning South Asian arts in Britain, this aspect of their heritage no longer becomes a custom 'from a distant place' and instead becomes a method through which they are able to engage with their heritage in another authentic and workable way. Indeed, using the arts as a vehicle to allow young South Asians to engage with their cultural heritage may provide a counter-narrative to engagement with religious ideology which is often the only choice for many young South Asians looking to engage with their tradition. Further research is required to understand how young South Asians engage with the arts and how this impacts on their ideas of identity and belonging.

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<sup>42</sup> For example see Geaves (2007), Lewis (2007) and Jacobson's (1998) studies of young British Muslims, Knott (1996a), Raj (2000), Nesbitt (1991, 1998) and Jackson and Nesbitt's (1993) studies of young British Hindus and Drury (1991) and Hall's (2002) studies of young British Sikhs.

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## Appendix A – South Asian National Portfolio Organisations 2015-2018

Name	Location	Established	Discipline
Akademi	Camden, London	1979	Dance
Akram Khan Dance	Islington, London	2000	Dance
Art Asia	Southampton	1981 <sup>43</sup>	Theatre
Asian Arts Agency	Bristol	1997 <sup>44</sup>	Combined Arts
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan	Hammersmith, London	1972	Music
Darbar Arts Culture and Heritage Trust	Leicester	2005 <sup>45</sup>	Music
Gem Arts	Gateshead	1989 <sup>46</sup>	Combined Arts
Kala Sangam	Bradford	1993 <sup>47</sup>	Combined Arts
Kali Theatre Company	Lewisham	1991 <sup>48</sup>	Theatre
Milapfest	Liverpool	1985 <sup>49</sup>	Combined Arts
Peshkar Productions	Oldham	1991	Combined Arts
Rifco Arts	Watford	1999 <sup>50</sup>	Theatre

<sup>43</sup> [http://artasia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/annual\\_report\\_2006.pdf](http://artasia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/annual_report_2006.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.asianartsagency.co.uk/about-us/about-asian-arts-agency>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/browse-regularly-funded-organisations/npo/darbar-arts-culture-heritage-trust/>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.gemarts.org/about/history.php>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.kalasangam.org/about-us/about-kala-sangam/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.kalitheatre.co.uk/about/about.html>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.milapfest.com/home/sub-page-test/test-sub-page/>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.sloughexpress.co.uk/News/All-Areas/Slough/Arts-in-Slough-will-be-given-a-boost-thanks-to-funding-27062014.htm>

Sampad	Birmingham	1990	Combined Arts
Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company	Islington (London)	1988	Dance
Sonia Sabri Company	Birmingham	2002	Dance
South Asian Arts	Leeds	1997	Music
Tamasha Theatre Company Ltd	Tower Hamlets	1989	Theatre
Tara	Wandsworth	1977	Theatre

## Appendix B – Non NPO South Asian Arts Organisations

Name	Location	Established	Discipline
Alamail Palim Dance Company	Sussex		
Altered Skin	Ipswich		
Amina Khayyam	Surrey, London		
Annapurna Indian Dance Company	Halifax		
Ankura Dance Academy	Coventry		
Anurekha Ghosh Company	Birmingham		
Asian Arts Alive	Keighley		
Asian Music Circuit	London		
Aspara Arts	London		
Beeja Dance	London		
Centre of Indian Classical Dance	Leicester		
Chitraleka Dance Company	Birmingham		
Dhruv Arts	London		
Honeys Dance Academy	Essex, London		
India Dance Wales	Cardiff		
Jasmine Simhalan Co	London		
Kadam	Bedfordshire		
Kala the Arts	Hampshire		
Kala Kahani	East Midlands		
Kalakunj	Reading, Berkshire		
Kalaimanram	Milton Keynes		

Kalalaya	Ashford, Surrey		
Kala Premi	Newcastle		
Kalasagara UK	Harrow		
Mrittika Arts	Coventry		
Manasamitra	Dewsbury		
Manushi Dance	Nottingham		
Mavin Khoo Dance	London		
Motiroti (No longer active)	London		
Nandavana Dance Group	Sheffield		
Narthaki	Stafford		
Nava Kala Dance Academy	Croydon		
Narthana Kalalaya	London		
North West Asian Arts	Bolton		
Nottingham Asian Arts Agency	Nottingham		
Nritya Kala Academy	London		
Nupur Arts	Leicester		
Oriental Arts	Bradford		
Pratap Pawar	Middlesex		
Rachana Dance Academy	Middlesex		
SAAZ Music	Hertfordshire		
Sankalpam	London		
Sanskriti School of Dance	Cambridge		
SANSKRITI	Ilford, Essex		
Sarra Whicheloe	Surrey / Sussex		

Sadhana Dance	London		
SAPAC	Swindon		
Seeta Patel	South West		
Shisha (No longer active)	Manchester		
Shruti Arts	Leicester		
Srishti	Middlesex		
SpaTikam	London		
Srishti - Nina Rajarani Dance Creations	Middlesex		
Subrang Arts	Croydon		
Surdhwani	Wolverhampton		
Surtal Arts	Derby		
Suchitdance	London		
Swati Dance Company	Lancashire		
Trishool Dance Academy	Leeds / Bradford		
Upahaar School of Dance	Croydon		
Upasana	Manchester		
Vedic Organisation of Indian Culture and Education	Manchester		
Vijayanarthanalaya	London		
Zoobin Karma Dance	Leeds		



