Lessons from Gulam: Asian Music in Bradford

CONTENTS

I.INTRODUCTION

II.RESEARCH IN BRADFORD

III. THE FILMMAKING PROCESS

IV. THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE FILM

V. THE AFTERMATH

VI. NOTES

VII. REFERENCES CITED

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these notes is to provide additional contextual information about Asian music in Bradford, to give an account of the process by which *Lessons from Gulam* was made, and to comment from a variety of perspectives on certain scenes and shots in the film. Experiences with showing the film to many varied audiences have raised a number of questions, and the present notes are in part written with these queries in mind.

This film was made in my second year as a Levcrhulme Film Training Fellow at the National Film and Television School*. In planning this work I wanted to utilise my familiarity with music in the Muslim culture of Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent Pakistan, and to take as my subject music making in one of the Muslim Asian communities living in Britain. Although I had never visited the city, Bradford attracted my attention. The city's large Muslim population had been in the news for various reasons, most recently the Honeyford affair, when a Bradford head-teacher had to resign after publishing critical articles in an extreme right-wing journal about school education in areas with large immigrant communities*. Bradford was the city to which journalists and others went to report on poverty, racial prejudice and fundamentalist Islam. In this city, I felt sure, there would be something of the "life of music" that was familiar to me from Central and South Asia. I did not want to comment directly on immigration but to take the presence of the Asian community for granted. Nor did I want to focus on race relations as such, but to produce something that would be good for race relations by portraying South Asians in a positive and sympathetic manner.

This is a training film, where one has the freedom to experiment and to take risks. In some ways, too, it is a film makers' film, for it posits certain problems in shooting and editing that documentary film makers

sometimes encounter, and offers solutions to those problems. Thus at a quite abstract level the film is itself an exegesis and an argument. Before going to Bradford I speculated on the possibility of making a film about Indipop, a modem genre of popular music that is a blend of Asian and Western musical elements, thinking to use this as a metaphor of wider processes of cultural synthesis, but for various reasons this goal remained unfulfilled. I also wanted to make this an issue film, in contrast to a film portrait, and in this respect I have only been partly successful, for in many ways the final film is a portrait, or rather a double portrait. It was also intended from the outset that the making of the film should be the occasion for conducting a legitimate piece of field research, with the hope of capturing the sense of exploration and revelation that accompanies fieldwork. In the event, the film came to be a study of a key element in any music culture, musical enculturation; the processes through which people develop their inherent musical abilities and learn specific musical skills. The film does this by showing people learning and practising music in a variety of contexts, contrasting what goes on in the informal setting of the home with the more formal school situation.

II. RESEARCH IN BRADFORD

In the mid-1980s the population of the Bradford Metropolitan Area was about 350,000, of which perhaps 60,000 were Asian*. Cities in modem Britain vary widely with respect to the relative proortions of the various minority communities. In Bradford, Muslim Asians predominate; Hindu and Sikh communities are comparatively small, and there are few West Indians. Within the Muslim community of Bradford the majority have come from Pakistan, especially from the Mirpur district of Azad Kashmir (60-70% of the Pakistanis are Mirpuris, according to Khan 1977:57). There

is also a much smaller Muslim community from Gujarat, in India, most of whose members are "secondary immigrants", who came to Britain from various East African countries in the late 1960s. In many cases they left Africa under duress, feeling threatened by policies of Africanization as countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda became independent from Britain. For reasons explained below, most of the people I worked with in Bradford were from this Gujarati community.

The former considerable wealth of Bradford was founded on the textile industry. Pakistanis started coming to Bradford in significant numbers from the early 1950s, and were actively recruited in Pakistan by agents for the various textile mills, which needed cheap labour. Thirty years later the community was well settled, though the textile industry had entered a state of decline. The Gujaratis came later, and to some extent remained distanced from their Pakistani co-religionists, by language, and the region of the sub-continent to which they felt connected. Large areas of the city of Bradford

were predominantly Asian: there were many mosques, Asian shops and restaurants. There was also considerable recruitment of Asians to the professions as doctors, dentists, real estate agents, accountants, lawyers, architects, school teachers, civil servants and community workers. One could, if one so wished, operate within a social arena largely peopled by Muslim Asians. In 1985-6 Bradford had its first Asian Mayor, Mohammad Ajeeb Khan, from Azad Kashmir, once a bus driver in the city.

The Mirpuris were regarded by other Asian communities in Bradford as relatively unsophisticated. They came from a rural area of Pakistan and the original immigrants were unfamiliar with urban life. In Mirpur the status of musician was extremely low in the social order, and musical performance was the domain of a musician caste called Mirasi (from miras, "inheritance"). As far as I can tell, no Mirasis emigrated to Britain from Mirpur. As a community the Mirpuris had little interest in music; they might enjoy it in the Hindi movies they watched on videos, but music was certainly not something they wanted to perform themselves, nor wanted their children to learn about, in or out of school. The prejudice against music and musicians associated with some orthodox forms of Islam could be seen at work here.

The Gujarati Muslim community presented a completely different profile. Most of the Gujarati Muslims belonged to the Khalifa community, part of the Hajam sub-caste in Gujarat, whose traditional occupations include those of barber and musician. The term khalifa is related to "caliph" and is used in some Muslim countries to mean "master craftsman". The occupational juxtaposition of barber and musician was familiar to me from Afghanistan, where the term khalifa is often used to address a barber (see Sakata 1983:77-84; Baily, 1988:102-3). It seems that when significant numbers of people from British India migrated to East Africa, then also under British rule, there was a demand for barbers, and the Hajam of Gujarat, geographically close to Africa, took advantage of this. Once in East Africa they may have encouraged their children to turn to higher ranking and economically more rewarding occupations, but the connection with barbering and music remained strong. At some point they adopted the name Khalifa for themselves, presumably to escape the pejorative connotations of the term Hajam.

The Khalifas in Britain in 1986 comprised a dozen separate communities, each with its own Khalifa Society and all affiliated to the Federation of the Gujarati Muslim Khalifa Societies of U.K. There were two Khalifa Societies in Bradford, and they were also found in Coventry, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Dewsbury, Blackburn, Nuneaton, Luton and Southall (in west London). The Khalifas had a keen sense of their own identity, and through their membership lists knew who they all were. In 1986 the total size of their community in Britain was about 1,800 persons. Each Khalifa Society had its cricket and football team and competed during the season in Inter-Khalifa Tournaments. Unlike the Mirpuris in Bradford, the Khalifas were highly involved in music making. Several of the most prominent Asian musicians living in London were Khalifas. Some were accompanists on BBC Asian music programmes, and others belonged to modem Indipop groups. In Bradford there was little scope for full-time professional Asian musicians, but I found a high incidence of amateur musicianship amongst the Khalifas. I believe further investigation would show that Khalifas thought of themselves as inherently musical, and that this was part of their self-identity as a community.

Up to 1986 there was very little provision for "Asian music"* in Bradford schools. Muslim reservations about the value of music were well known to school teachers. The dissertation of Patricia Jones, herself a teacher in Bradford (Jones 1984), gives much valuable information. She found amongst Pakistani children at middle school level (95% of whom spoke a language other than English to their parents) that although some listened to a good deal of music at home (Western as well as Asian), very few had any involvement in practical music making. Bradford school teachers had noted that Asian children experienced problems with music classes in school. Out of a total of 1,010 children receiving peripatetic instrumental lessons (in Western music) only 25 were from "non-European families" (Jones 1984:37). Many teachers wanted to cater to the musical interests of Asian children but felt they lacked adequate knowledge or resources.

A small organization called Oriental Arts specifically aimed at "promoting racial harmony through the use of music, dance and drama" in Bradford. It organized concerts and various music courses, and from time to time recruited groups of musicians to give Asian music workshops at the request of Bradford schools. In 1986 Bradford's Directorate of Educational Services had decided to adopt a more direct role in promoting Asian music in school, and advertised for a co-ordinator to organise a teaching program. At the same time, the Directorate sponsored a series of school visits by the Oriental Arts team to give demonstration-concerts during the spring and summer school terms. The Directorate wanted to move cautiously. They were afraid of a negative reaction from Asian parents who did not particularly want their children to be taught music in school, and who might view the teaching of Asian music as a move calculated to undermine traditional Muslim values. There had been difficulties before over such issues as the provision of halal meat for school meals, and separate physical education for boys and girls. Another controversy was to be avoided if possible.

During my first brief visit to Bradford in February 1986, Champak Kumar, Co-ordinator of Oriental Arts, gave me a list of a dozen Asian music groups in Bradford, and it was in contacting some of them that I first met Gulam*. Gulam is from the Khalifa community and a member of a hereditary musician family. He was brought up in Kenya and moved to Britain in 1968. In Kenya he had worked as a storeman and semi-professional musician: his group Aaghaz Party had won the annual qawwali competition in Nairobi in 1964 and been awarded the silver cup. In Bradford he worked for British Rail for many years. An elder of the Khalifa community, former secretary of his local Khalifa Cultural Society, and member of the Bradford Council of Mosques, he was a man of some consequence. He ran a band in Bradford called Saz aur Awaz ("Music and Song"), which occasionally played at small parties and wedding festivities, particularly within the Khalifa community. The personnel of Gulam's band varied over time, and consisted mainly of his Khalifa relatives, usually trained by Gularn to be his accompanists. The group was essentially amateur, its members played together for their own enjoyment, mainly in Sunday afternoon "rehearsals" at Gulam's house. If they played at Khalifa wedding parties it was to fulfill community obligations. On rare occasions when they played at private parties, members of the band suspected that Gularn sometimes received payment but did not share the money.

As a singer and harmonium player Gulam specialised in a type of Muslim religious music called qawwali, which is widespread in India

and Pakistan, where it is particularly associated with Sufi shrines (Qureshi 1986). He also performed the genre known as ghazal, Gujarati wedding songs, and some film songs. In India qawwali is regarded as a sub-genre of "classical music", making use of the melodic modes (rags) and metric cycles (tals) of the classical tradition. But qawwali is also a popular music, featured in many Hindi films. Gulam followed a qawwali style that had been popular in the 1960s. As a musical genre qawwali is distinguished by its mystical and devotional poetry, group singing, hand clapping, and the alternation of poetic couplets sung in a slow unmetred manner with fast, highly rhythmic, singing. The same musical style can be applied to secular poetry. Real qawwali is an ecstatic music and in its proper performance context, the sama' ("spiritual concert") in the Sufi shrine, is used to induce states of trance. Gulam attached much importance to the fact that he played religious music, and he naturally revered the Sufi shrines of the subcontinent, some of which he had visited and played at. There are no Sufi shrines in Britain, and in that sense no real context for the performance of qawwali.

One of Gulam's roles in the Asian community was that of music teacher. As leader of his qawwali group he taught his accompanists (mostly also his Khalifa relatives) to play their individual roles in the performance of this relatively complex music. He did not claim the status of ustad, "master musician" - he felt his own limitations in musical knowledge too keenly - and certainly did not act like an ustad, but the data indicate that in the context of Bradford he had that status. He sometimes taught in Hindu and Sikh Temples in Bradford, and also played religious music for their festivities*. He had a repertory of Gujarati bhajans, Hindu religious songs, and no doubt back in Gujarat his ancestors had performed for Hindu patrons for generations. In 1986 the only regular members of Gulam's band who were not from the Khalifa community were Shaukat, whose connections were with Mirpur, and Shaukat's son Imran. Shaukat had moved to Bradford from Pakistan when he was eleven. By profession a motor mechanic, some months previously he had given up his garage business, and while unemployed was keen to advance his musical skills. He had become passionately interested in singing and playing the harmonium four years earlier, at the age of about thirty (rather late in life) and he was also determined that his children should learn Asian music. For several years he had been taking his son Imran for tabla lessons with a well known teacher in Manchester, Pandit Manikrao Popathkar, and he had more recently started taking his older daughter there for singing lessons. Shaukat himself had studied with several music teachers in Bradford, who occasionally gave series of evening classes, and had also learned sonic material from Popathkar. He joined Gulam's group in 1984.

In 1986 Gulam and Shaukat were great friends, and their common interest in music is portrayed in the film. Gulam wanted to mod-

ernise the sound of Saz aur Awaz. He had obtained an electronic keyboard and some amplification and was now awaiting the delivery of a conga drum set. He wanted to train Shaukat as lead singer of the group and for him to perform popular film songs. They also planned to write new songs together. However, as I got to know them better I realised that they were too committed to older and more traditional styles of Asian music for them to be able to succeed in these ambitions. Shaukat himself expressed doubts that he would ever have the confidence to dance about on stage. Naya Saz, a large group of younger musicians in Bradford, was already established as an Asian pop band, playing mainly "hits" from the large corpus of Indian film songs. I could not imagine Saz aur Awaz coming up with the same kind of stage show.

Besides leading his qawwali group, Gulam was also leader of the workshop team recruited by Oriental Arts to give Asian music workshops in Bradford schools. Champak Kumar, Co-ordinator of Oriental Arts, often took part in the workshops, but was sometimes otherwise engaged and would then send Shaukat in his place. A third member of the workshop team was Norman, a Londoner who had lived in the Bradford area for many years. In 1986 he was making his living as a private music teacher, mainly of guitar (classical, jazz and folk). He had trained as a school teacher but never felt able to submit to the final teaching assessment and so had not qualified. He started playing the sitar in about 1984 and was essentially self-taught, as a close examination of his performance technique in the film reveals*. He had learned most of what he knew about rags, tals, and compositions from Gulam. Because he was the only musician in Bradford who played the sitar, Norman soon found himself in demand. This was a source of some embarrassment because he realiscd that he did not know very much about Asian music. But the sheer sound of the sitar was enough for him to be courted by several groups, including Saz aur Awaz and Naya Saz. He occasionally played at Asian restaurants with Gulam accompanying on tabla.

In the workshops Norman did most, if not all, of the talking. This annoys some viewers, who see this as an example of the English participant occupying the position of power. Why should the white man, who has obviously learned about this music only recently, do the talking, while those best qualified to speak (like Gulam) are silent? Gulam, however, did not see it that way. As far as he was concerned, giving workshops was a chore and repeating the same remarks at four workshops a day, two days a week, a bore. He was quite content for Norman to be given the hard work. Norman could also explain aspects of Asian music in Western musical terms that school teachers in Bradford familiar with that system could readily comprehend, and the workshops were for the benefit of teachers as well as pupils.

III. THE FILMMAKING PROCESS

Lessons from Gulam would be described by Breitrose as a "reflexive observational film".

Reflexive observational films are characterised by the presence of the film-maker or a surrogate on the screen, the use of first person narration, and the frank admission that this is a film. The form resembles a kind of ethnography, in which the ethnographer defines his observations as occurring within a spatial and temporal framework and admits his cultural biases and the nature of his interactions with the group being observed.
Breitrose 1986:47

Lessons from Gulam is about ethnomusicological research, and to this extent is a film about itself. The data shown - the lessons and rehearsals - are the research data: they are not illustrative of a wider investigation or set of conclusions. They show some facets of musical enculturation in Bradford, but the film does not tell us what these add up to. Rather, they should prompt further inquiry. At the same time, the film has several other frames of reference: it is a double portrait of Gulam and Shaukat, a narrative of a visit to Bradford, and a qawwali session.

The shoot

The film was shot by Andy Jillings, then in his final year as a documentary director and camera student at the NFTS, someone with a special interest in and commitment to anthropological film making. The camera used was an Aaton with an Angeneux 9.5 - 57 lens. We shot on Fuji film. For occasional lighting we used Lowel lights and photofloods. Sound was recorded with a stereo Nagra.

After several preliminary visits, I took up residence in Bradford's Southfield Square, a strongly Asian area, on 21 March 1986. Andy joined me on 19 April, we started shooting on 26 April and continued intermittently until 11 June. The research and shoot were conducted on a rather tight time schedule because my fellowship at the NFTS only lasted till October and I wanted to finish the editing by that time. We knew in advance that the shoot would run into Ramadan, the Muslim month of fast, and that Ramadan would probably have to be featured in the film. In 1986 Ramadan in Bradford began on 10 May, and ended on 7 June*. A substantial amount of filming was in fact carried out during Ramadan, and used as though it had been shot beforehand.

Two principal strands of action were followed during the shoot: workshops and domestic scenes. The challenge was always to integrate these, and get the right balance between them. The shoot was characterised by endless self-questioning and discussions with Andy about what we were doing, and about the subject of the film, with constant reviews of what had been shot and what else required to be shot. Several times we were able to screen mute rushes and see exactly how things were coming along. The observational type of shooting in school workshops posed a number of technical difficulties; Norman paced about a good deal, the children had to be heard, and the musicians used their own small PA system which interfered with the natural sound*. Andy also had difficulties: although much of the action was at floor level, Norman only sat down when he played his sitar. An advantage of the workshops was that they followed a rather fixed program - like a ritual - so that one could decide in advance which part of the workshop should be filmed on that occasion.

Other kinds of difficulty arose in shooting the domestic scenes. It is notoriously difficult to make a film about routine everyday life when nothing much seems to be going on, and where the activities of the film makers are perhaps the most interesting things around. The musicians were shy even when performing. This

applied particularly to Gulam, who tended to hide behind his songbooks and look away from the camera when singing. I found myself having to take an increasingly active role, asking many questions in order to elicit information, and determining in advance what to shoot, The unseen film maker was becoming too much a pan of the footage, and eventually Andy persuaded me to participate as an actor, in case it became necessary to deal with my presence in the edited film.

I had many reservations about the shoot. It was all too rushed and I was embarrassed by my intrusion into their lives. I knew what I wanted from them - the material to make a good movie - and I had to impose on them to try to get it, but it was an experience that I did not enjoy putting them through. They understood that I was making a film about the workshop and about the people in it, but they did not perhaps realise how central they would be; that it would be essentially a film about them. Through joining them on the other side of the camera I was able to experience something of what I was asking of them, and at the same time to give them more confidence. This is perhaps evident in Gulam's qawwali singing at the end of the film, where I am a participant, not an observer.

Editing

Parallel with the problems of the shoot were problems in editing the film. Several constituencies had to be satisfied:

1. The film had to have a positive impact on Bradford audiences, with the interests of the musicians given paramount importance. Also, if the film was to promote Asian music education in Bradford, it was important to present the musicians in as positive a way as possible according to Muslim values.
2. The film had to have an educational content and to be of interest to school teachers who were faced with the problem of introducing Asian music into their curricula.
3. The film had to be ethnomusicologically sound.
4. It had to satisfy the cinematic criteria of the NFTS audience, concerned less with systematically organized ethnography than with making good movies.

In procedural terms I held regular weekly screenings of the film at the NFTS to whatever audience of film makers I could muster at the time. Their feedback was invaluable. After each screening we would have a long discussion, followed by a week's cutting before the next screening. Some people followed the changes made week by week and were able to evaluate the success of solutions to problems identified at earlier screenings. Sometimes a new person would be present, which was very important for getting a fresh view of the material. In all the film passed through a first assembly and seven rough cuts before a fine cut was obtained, and this still required many finishing touches before the final sound mix and ordering the first answer print.

I initially cut the material for a film called Asian Music Workshop. The idea was to begin

the film with the start of a workshop, to sandwich sections of the workshop with episodes in the lives of the three participants, Gulam, Shaukat and Norman, and to finish the film with the end of a workshop. I did not appear at all. Various problems arose with this version of the film, some of them centred around Norman, whose strong presence and clarity of articulation tended to take over the story. It was becoming a film about Norman, and that was not my intention at all. The real difficulty was that Asian Music Workshop was not very interesting as a film. A new strategy had to be adopted, and I decided to shift the balance away from the workshops and concentrate on the idea of music lessons.

In order to make sense of a disorderly sequence of scenes showing people learning music in a variety of situations, I recut the film so that everything possible was done to impose a structure on it, to make it coherent as a text. Underlying structure is very important in film editing. It may or may not be apparent to the observer, but certainly operates at a sub-conscious level. In the new version the film follows three parallel structures. Firstly, it is framed as a qawwali session: it begins as a qawwali session starts, with an introductory instrumental piece, there is a long sequence of qawwali performance in the middle, and it ends with the performance of a song commonly used to bring a qawwali session to a close. Secondly, the film is presented as the story of a visit to Bradford, with narration in the first person, and footage of the film maker engaged in musical activities with Gulam and his band. Thirdly, the film is a double portrait, of Gulam and his friend Shaukat.

Because of his shyness, much of our footage of Gulam talking had to be laid aside, as I found it tended to arouse feelings of embarrassment in the audience. Instead, material was selected that showed other people (including the film maker) telling the audience about Gulam. Everything possible was done to develop his "presence" as a music teacher. 'Ibis is reinforced by the title Lessons from Gulam, with the added twist that the "lessons" include what I learned about film making from working with him in Bradford. Following a suggestion by Colin Young, each scene is introduced by an inter-title which cues the. viewer as to what the scene is about~ with a "poetic" sub-script to qualify each description. With this battery of cinematic techniques, order is imposed upon the material.

In Lessons from Gulam I have also dispensed with sub-titles. Almost all the dialogue is in English, while the song texts are in a form of Urdu which is barely distinguishable from Hindi, with some Sindi in the final song ("Mast Qalandar"). In part I wanted to see how the film would work if one did away with the distraction of sub-titles, which are in any case quite inadequate for conveying the meaning of some of the poetry sung in the film. This difficulty was brought home to me in working on the song texts with a succession of highly educated Urdu speakers, who produced very different literal translations of the poetry. Had I subtitled the texts at the time the film was printed (1986) 1 would have found myself saddled with something that was misleading and sometimes simply incorrect. I believe that better service is rendered to Gulam and Shaukat's singing by giving translations of the song texts in this study guide.

From the strictly literary point viewpoint there are certain obvious errors in the texts sung by Gulam and Shaukat. In Urdu poetry there is an emphasis on precise patterning of long and short syllables, and sometimes these texts deviate from the rules. It is unclear from where these deviations arise. An Urdu scholar would

have taken a great interest in Gulam's song books (see pages 16 and 24), looking to see what poetry he had written out, how accurately the poetry of known poets was reproduced, and what sort of variations could be found. Since Gulam's versions of poems were often derived by transcribing sung versions from gramophone records the opportunities for variation were legion. We are in effect dealing with an oral version of a literary tradition.

IV. THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE FILM

Dramatis Personae (in order of introduction)

Gulam: singer, harmonium and tabla player.
Ahmad: barber, a relative of Gulam.
John Baily: film maker and rubab player.
Shaukat: motor mechanic, singer and harmonium player.
Yusuf.- school teacher, doholak and tabla player.
Norman: guitar teacher and sitar player.
1mran: Shaukat's son, schoolboy and tabla player.
Fazeela: Gulam's gmnd-daughter.
Kasem: Gulam's father, formerly a professional tabla player.
Fakir. Gulam's brother-in law, electric banju player.
Farook: Gulam's son, tabla player.
Daud: Gulam's relative, player of the glass clappers.
Anvar: Gulam's son, player of the rattle.
Nasrah: Shaukat's sister, a nurse.

Overall structure of the film

All scenes except Scene1. are introduced with inter-titles, but these are not numbered in the film itself.

Scene 1. Introduction to Gulam and Shaukat
Scene 2. Shaukat's ghazal lesson
Scene 3. Workshop
Scene 4. Qawwali rehearsal
Scene 5. The Touchstone
Scene 6. Ramadan: The month of fast
Scene 7. Celebrating the end of the fast

A shot by shot analysis

All dates refer to date of shooting.

SCENE 1. INTRODUCTION TO GULAM AND SHAUKAT

Shot 1. Gulam plays an introductory naghma. 27 April 1986.

This is typical of the kind of instrumental piece (naghma) played at the beginning of a qawwali session. It has several purposes here: it starts the film off with music, draws our attention to the film's principal protagonist, and serves in framing the whole film as a qawwali session. This was shot in Gulam's front room at the beginning of the rehearsal that we return to in Scene 4.

TITLE CARDS:

Lessons from Gulam

Asian Music in Bradford

The music from Shot 1 is laid over the title cards and cross-fades in the next shot.

Shot 2. Establishing shot across Bradford. 7 June 1986.

Shot on a tripod from Cliffe Road, on the east side of Bradford. We waited many days for a fine early morning to get this shot. That year

the weather seemed especially bad in Bradford. I wanted to show Bradford in a good light (literally) and to get away from the depressing and negative images usually projected of the city. A notable feature of the shot are the many factory chimneys, all smokeless, indicative of the industrial decline of Bradford. The shot ends on the Lister Mill, in its time the largest textile mill in Bradford, and now empty. During this shot the commentary (spoken by John Baily) begins:

"Bradford is a mill town in the north of England, known for its large Muslim Asian community, perhaps sixty thousand strong. I came here in the spring of 1986 to look for musicians within this community who played traditional forms of music like those I knew from my studies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I wanted to see if such music flourished in Bradford, and how people were learning to play it. And I had to move quickly because Ramadan, the Muslim month of fast, was due to start in a few weeks, and then there would be no music."

Many drafts for this commentary were written, for it is difficult to get the wording condensed and in straightforward language. I decided it was best to introduce the idea of Ramadan right at the beginning, since it becomes quite an important part of the film. The wording implies a "race against time" which is usually a good narrative point in a film. It was necessary to record the narration so that it comes across as informal and natural, often difficult to achieve in the studio. In the end I recorded this, and the other sections of narration, in my front room at home.

It is necessary to comment on the use of the phrase "traditional music" in the above narration. Some people have criticised this film on the grounds that it misrepresents North Indian "classical" music, but I have been careful to avoid using that term. I call the music "traditional" because it is founded on the principles of rag (melodic mode) and tal (metric cycle) common to many genres of South Asian music. Qawwali is certainly regarded as an ancient genre, whose creation is credited to Amir Khusro in the thirteenth century A.D., while the musical form for singing Urdu ghazals goes back at least to the mid-nineteenth century. The film songs that Gulam sings are from a repertory that is now seen as belonging to a past "golden era" of popular film music which conformed more closely to traditional concepts of rag and tal than later film music.

Shot 3. Gulam in the street. 8 May 1986.

Gulam walking down Barkerend Road, which is near his house in a predominantly Asian area, to the "Cut and Dry Hair Salon". Functionally this shot serves to focus our attention on the main protagonist while providing an appropriate moment for some narration, which continues:

"I was directed to Gulam, the dean of Asian musicians in Bradford. Gulam was born in Gujarat, in India, was raised in Kenya, and has lived in Bradford since 1968. He comes from a

musician family and he specialises in a type of Muslim religious music called qawwali. Back in Kenya, Gulam was a celebrity, but in Bradford it's hard for him to earn a living as a musician. Nevertheless, he and some friends, who share his passion for music, play together whenever they can."

The narration emphasises that Gulam and his friends are amateurs, and that they feel passionately about music; we should not expect from them the technical skill found in the performance of a famous Indian or Pakistani master musician.

Shot 4. Gulam at the barber's. 8 May 1986.

This scene (Shots 3-5) was set up by me. I suggested to Gulam that he might like to go for a haircut while we followed him with the camera. I knew that the two barbers were close relatives of Gulam's and I had hoped that Ahmad, who cuts Gulam's hair, would talk about their Khalifa identity, or at least about the coming cricket tournament within the Khalifa community. Unfortunately, Ahmad would not be drawn to expand on these topics, but he does at least corroborate the statement that Gulam was well known as a musician in Kenya.

Shot 5. Gulam examines his finished haircut. 8 May 1986.

As Gulam examines the back of his bead with a hand mirror and approves the barber's handiwork the narration continues:

"Gulam was just the man I was looking for, a singer with a good knowledge of traditional music, and who was also a music teacher. My lessons with him gave me an entree into Asian musical life in Bradford. "

Shot 6. John Baily having a lesson from Gulam. 25 May 1986.

This shot was made during Ramadan after it had become clear that we might need footage of the film's director with the actors. But although the scene was set up, it is representative of part of my life in Bradford, which was learning about qawwdali from Gulam. I soon discovered that of the various genres of South Asian music qawwali was most like the urban music I had worked on in Afghanistan. For this scene I chose a qawwali that I had recorded from Gulam's band and started to learn it from the tape. I arranged to visit him with the purpose of working it out further and we shot this scene. We are practising the asthayi section of the composition and I allude to the higher section, the antara, as more difficult, but we do not hear that part. The instrument I am playing is the Afghan rubab, also found in northern Pakistan and Kashmir. It is used in connection with qawwali performance in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

Part of the importance of this shot is to establish the film maker in a subservient role as a student, not the all-knowing intelligence

one so often encounters in documentary films. Ibis helps to build up Gulam's role as a music teacher in the film. The shot also shows ethnomusicological fieldwork in action: learning to perform is an important research method.

Shot 7. Shaukat walks out to the car. 6 May 1986.

Having established Gulam's identity we now set about introducing his friend Shaukat, who lives in a lower middle-class suburban estate in a mainly English area. The narration continues:

"Gulam's friend Shaukat was born in Pakistan and has lived in Bradford since he was eleven. He's a keen amateur musician and one of Gulam's protégés. By profession he's a motor mechanic and until recently ran his own garage."

Shot 8. Shaukat questioned while working under the car. 6 May 1986.

Shaukat gave up his business after a bad experience with his partner, but still did odd jobs on cars belonging to friends and relations. When he refers to mechanical work being "in my blood" he implies that he has an inherent, inborn aptitude.

Shots 9- 10. Shaukat talks about Gulam. 6 May 1986.

Inside the house I talked to Shaukat about his friendship with Gulam. One point may need clarification; the friend, who had been trying to teach Shaukat, and who introduced him to Gulam - "He also told Ghulam Bhai* that I'll never be able to sing because I've got no idea about rhythm" - is a relative of Gulam's, not of Shaukat's. Shaukat's indebtedness to Gulam is quite apparent. His mention of Ramadan as a time when people are in a "bad mood" because of the change in their "stomach routine" reinforces the reference made in Shot 2 to Ramadan, and helps prepare us for the arrival of the month of fast later in the film. Shaukat also distinguishes usefully between two genres of music, film songs and ghazals. The information that he has problems with learning new ghazals leads us into the next scene.

SCENE 2. SHAUKATS GHAZAL LESSON

Inter-title

SHAUKAT'S GHAZAL LESSON
"I loved you with a passion"

One often learns more when people make mistakes than when everything goes smoothly; hence the fascination of the music lesson where things go wrong. It is even more revealing when there is some discussion about the nature of the problem.

Shaukat had recently started learning this ghazal from Popathkar, in Manchester. Although Gulam did not regard Popathkar with enthusiasm, and certainly knew where Shaukat had learned this song, he was nevertheless ready to help him with it. One of the problems with ghazal singing is fitting the text to the melodic line, which requires precise phrasing of the poetry.

Shot 11. Shaukat and Gulam get ready. 4 May 1986.

Shaukat says (in Urdu), "I've got a problem of rhythm," to which Gulam replies, "God willing, the rhythm will come!" The books they hold are hand-written volumes of song texts in several languages, including Gujarati and Urdu. Gulam has many such books, all written in Gujarati script. In Manchester I met a

young Asian singer who spoke Urdu but could not write and read it with facility. He rendered the Urdu texts in his songbooks with a Roman transliteration.

Shots 12-13. Shaukat sings and talks. 4 May 1986.

The material presented here is only a part of Shaukat's performance. The text is from a poem by Bahadur Shah II, the last Moghul Emperor. His poetic pen name was "Zafar". The part of the ghazal Shaukat sings says:

[I had already forgotten her...
People reminded me.

People have done me favours...
And I give thanks to you.

You shot me with the arrow of a glance...
People pierced me with their eyes.

In my love, against my madness...
What abuse did people not utter!

You destroyed me pretty largely...
People set fire [to the ruins].

Loving an idol, what can I say...
Every face was like hers.

I had already forgotten her...
People reminded me.
In choosing the sub-script for the inter-tide - "I loved you with a passion" - I used a line (half-couplet) from in an early translation I was given of this poem. In the present translation this line is rendered as "In my love, against my madness…" The line was used as a sub-script to suggest that the object of Shaukat's love was music herself.

Shot 12 focuses on the drummers Yusuf (an upper school mathematics teacher) playing doholak, and Shaukat's son Imran on tabla. Note that Yusuf is left-handed, and the drum head facing the camera is that used to strike the lower pitches. There is a sound cut here; the last part of Shot 12 is out of synch, the sound of Shot 13 having been laid forward. Shot 13 provides important information about Gulam's method of teaching, which is to sing along with his protégée, acting as a guide. Notation (oral or written) is not being used here, Gulam demonstrates through his own singing. The performance breaks down when Shaukat gets badly out of tune and Gulam brings them to a halt. "I can't remember the notes," says Shaukat. "Go on playing!" says Gulam to the drummers, but before they can start off again the film maker interrupts to find out what's wrong. Shaukat and Gulam explain that he's having trouble playing the harmonium and singing the ghazal at the same time.

Shot 14. Shaukat sings with Yusuf's "mouth drumming". 4 May 1986.

This analysis is shown to be correct when Shaukat sings without playing the harmonium. Yusuf accompanies him by drumming on his legs and vocalising the drum sounds. These are not orthodox drum bols (mnemonic syllables) but verbal representations of the drum sounds as Yusuf imagines them (he later told me). They are "abstractions from practice". I had seen Shaukat and Yusuf doing this, with the same ghazal, in the car when we drove back from Manchester after a lesson with Popathkar, and asked them to do the same here. Yusuf was reluctant but agreed, and this is one part of the film he dislikes. He thinks it makes him appear foolish, and he expressed the hope that none of his school pupils will get to see this, as "I will never be able to keep order again." His

urge to play a tiha'i (a type of rhythmic cadence) at the end seems irrepressible. After this brief performance Yusuf gives his own explanation for Shaukat's difficulties.

Shot 15. Shaukat on his learning the ghazal. 4 May 1986.

Shaukat pinpoints the problem that if you learn something by yourself you may learn it incorrectly. The question about Gulam being his teacher may seem redundant, we already know that, but it was asked in the hope of eliciting information about their relationship, and Gulam supplies this, denying that he is a teacher. "He is my best friend". It appears that Gulam wants to avoid implying that their relationship is unequal. Shaukat, on the other hand, seems to feel no reservation about acknowledging Gulam as his teacher, and describes how he gets "nervous in front of him". This illustrates the fact that in South Asia relations between people temporarily or permanently unequal (guest-host, pupil-teacher, wifetaker-wifegiver. etc.) are often marked verbally by contradictory expressions of denial and affirmation.

SCENE 3. WORKSHOP

Inter-title

WORKSHOP
"Dha Dhin Dhin Dha"

This section of the film focuses on playing the tabla drums, and shows various aspects of the tabla learning process, ending with a brief solo by a highly experienced player. The tabla is the principal type of drum used to accompany the various genres of art music in North India and Pakistan (and Afghanistan) and has a highly complex technique and repertory. The different strokes on the tabla are given onomatopoeic mnemonics (bols) such as Dha, Dhin, Na, Ta, Kat; these can be used both as a written and oral notation. The various metric cycles (tals) of Hindustani music are represented in skeletal form with standard sets of bols. Tin Tal and Ek Tal (16 and 12 rhythmic units, or matras, respectively) are mentioned here, and all the tabla playing in this scene is in Tin Tal.

Shot 16. Children arrive at school. 11 June 1986.
This is Pollard Street Middle School, Barkerend Road, which stands opposite Gulam's house. About 85% of the children attending this school are from Asian families, and Gulam's own children went there. We filmed Asian music workshops on two occasions at the school. The following narration runs over this shot:

"Sometimes Gulam and Shaukat visit schools as part of an Asian music workshop, together with. . . "

Shot 17. Norman and Gulam carry in equipment. 2 May 1986.

". . . Norman, who plays the sitar, and is another of Gulam's students. By virtue of his training as a school teacher Norman serves as spokesman for the group."

The Asian music "workshops" - my term, though readily adopted by the musicians - were officially designated as "demonstration-concerts" and were organised through Oriental Arts. Usually Champak Kumar, its Co-ordinator, went along to play tabla and doholak with Gulam and Norman. When he had other commitments Shaukat was asked to deputise. Gulam preferred this arrangement, Shaukat was his "best friend" and could be given the responsibility of singing, leaving the drumming to Gulam. In order to focus on Shaukat's relationship with Gulam I decided to film only at workshops where Shaukat replaced Champak. Although it is perfectly correct to say "Sometimes Gulam and Shaukat visit schools. . . ", it would have been more accurate to point out that Champak usually went. But this would have confused the audience and added little of importance.

Shots 18-21. Teaching about the tabla. 2 May 1986.
This sequence of four shots, filmed in the drama studio of Pollard Park School, shows a part of the workshop in which Norman tells the children something about the metric cycles (tal) of Asian music, gets them to clap the principal beats in Tin Tal and to recite the bols (tabla mnemonics) for Ek Tal.
In Shot 18 we see the children, with the sound of Norman talking in Shot 19 laid forward. In Shot 19 Norman talks about metric cycles, and in Shot 20 Gulam demonstrates Tin Tal, the most important metric cycle, with its 16 matras (equal time units). Gulam drums and speaks the bols out loud:

Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
1	2	3	4
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
5	6	7	8
Ta	Tin	Tin	Ta
9	to	11	12
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
13	14	15	16
Dha			
1			

In fact this demonstration of Tin Tal is somewhat simplified. Beats 9-12 make up the kha1i ("empty") line of the tal, distinguished by different drum strokes. This aids other musicians and listeners in keeping track of the all-important first (sam) beat of the tal. In playing beats 9-12 here, Gulam does not use the left hand, whereas it should play a different stroke (Kat instead of Ge). He does this for clarity of exegesis. Sometimes Norman would ask the children what was different about beats 9-12, the "answer" being that they "sound different".

Shot 20 continues with Norman getting the children to clap on beats 1, 5 and 13, and to wave on beat 9, challenging them by saying "I bet that somebody will clap on number nine, because they always do, or nearly always!" People involved in music education dislike this remark and think it indicative of poor teaching method.

In Shot 21 Norman has the children recite the bols of Ek Tal, a 12 matra cycle:

Dhin	Dhin	Dhaghe	Tirikid
1	2	3	4
Tu	Na	Kai	Ta
5	6	7	8
Dhaghe	Tirikid	Dhin	Na
9	10	11	12
Dhin			
1			

Shots 22-24. Imran teaches Yusuf. 24 May 1986.

Imran and Yusuf were both taking occasional lessons from Pandit Popathkar. Imran had

been learning tabla with him for several years while Yusuf, already a skilled doholak player (trained in part by Gulam), had only recently started learning tabla. On this occasion he had gone to Shaukat's house to check with Imran a new composition (technically speaking a qa'ida) Popathkar had given him to learn. This encounter was shot in Shaukat's front room.

The way this sequence is edited is supposed to intrigue the viewer, who at first assumes that Yusuf is teaching Imran, only later to discover that the transmission of information is in the opposite direction. We note the facility with which 1mran plays the tabla, and it is only when Yusuf starts trying to play the same piece that we realise the great amount of practice that Irnran has put in to get to his current level of proficiency.

Another important point made in Shot 24 is that the tabla player should have the tabla bols "in mind" when playing, and should speak them out loud while playing during the early stages of learning. Imran claims to be saying them "inside his head", but how can we be sure?

Shot 25. Gulam's grand-daughter plays with the tabla. 26 April 1986.

This and the succeeding shot were filmed on the first day of the shoot, in Gulam's front room. Fazeela is the daughter of Gulam's eldest son, Farook (a trainee chartered accountant), who lives in Gulam's house. The narration introduces this scene thus:

"Gulam believes his family is naturally musical. His father worked all his life as a tabla player, two of his sons play in his qawwali group, and his grand-daughter already shows an interest in music."

During a filmed interview not included in the film Gulam said: "My father is a musician, born musician indeed, it is automatically that I am a musician, well, not professionally, but, you know, born in music like. " And he told me on several occasions, "Music is in our blood*".

Gulam says to Fazeela, "They're taking the photographs, you play it, watch them!" She says: "Do you have powder?" Although Fazeela seems more interested in putting on the talcum powder used to "lubricate" the drum heads, she shows remarkable understanding of tabla technique. Notice the way she rotates the wrist of her right hand. At one point we also see Gulam grasp her wrist and guide it in making strokes. One sees here the way in which children in such hereditary musician families first acquire their musical skills. In the background sits Gulam's father, Kasem, who has a serious disease of the lungs; his wheezing is clearly audible.

Shot 26. Kasem plays the tabla.' 26 April 1986.

Gulam's elderly father, formerly a professional tabla player in India and Kenya, was sometimes present at my meetings with Gulam. He spoke seldom but still enjoyed music and came to listen to the qawwali rehearsals in the house, encouraging the musicians and sometimes drumming with his fingers on his knees. On this day we had taken the camera for the first time, and I had been playing rubab with Gulam on tabla. While we played Kasem became very animated and when we stopped he took the tabla and started to tune it. Sensing that something was about to happen we hurriedly set up and filmed as he started to play. At the end of his performance he was quite breathless and we feared for his life, but he soon recovered, and played again when Gulam tried to get Fazeela to dance. While his tabla, playing is comparatively simple he has a wonderfully crisp style. He plays in Tin Tal, providing a demonstration of how the tabla should be played. A brief closeup of his face (Shot 26a) is inserted at one point, covering up a confused bit of action after Fazeela walks past. This insert is taken from an earlier part of the shot and has been cut in so that he nods his head on the first beat of the cycle. Afterwards he talked a lot in English, which I had never heard him use before.

SCENE 4. QAWWALI REHEARSAL

Inter-title

QAWALI REHEARSAL*
"Let's go to Medina!"

Gulam held a regular rehearsal for his qawwali group on Sunday afternoons, playing through old material and practising new items. The rehearsal was more in the nature of a private qawwali session, open to occasional visitors, and this is where he trained new members of the group. These rehearsals were the main performance context for Gulam's group, a gathering of musicians playing together for their own enjoyment. Ghazals, film songs and instrumental pieces were also played at these sessions. Filming at the rehearsal involved a good deal of disruption to Gulam's front room, and a sofa had to be moved out to make more space.

Shot 27. Shaukat arrives. 27 April 1986.

This shot starts in the street outside Gulam's house and follows Shaukat into Gulam's front room, where the musicians are assembled. As he enters the room Shaukat says, "Salaam." Yusuf replies, "Salaam, come in." Shaukat: "How are you?" Yusuf: "Hurry up, it's getting late." Shaukat: "Sorry if I'm a bit late." The implication is that "Shaukat's always late", an idea alluded to in Shot 55.

Shots 28-29. Gulam explains what they are doing. 27 April 1986.

Gulam introduces the band: "my friend" Shaukat, playing keyboard; Gulam's son Farook, tabla; his father, sitting on the sofa; his nephew Daud, who plays the glass clappers; Gulam's son Anvar, rattle; Yusuf (who is a more distant relative), doholak; and Fakir, Gulam's sister's husband, electric banju (a modem version of the bolbol tarang). Gulam explains that he is going to sing a qawwali for his "uncle" (a widely used term for an older male relative) who is going soon on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Shot 30. Gulam sings a qawwali, 27 April 1986.

The text of this song is as follows:

Travelers to Medina, the street of the beloved comes to mind,
Because fortunate people get to breathe the air of Medina,
That is, peace comes to the eyes, eternal life to the heart.
The morning breeze comes, bearing good news of union,
And those sick with ill-fortune find health,
If anyone in pain goes, he finds medicine.

Travelers to Medina, the street of the beloved comes to mind,
Look cautiously, that center of lights comes,
Recite "Peace be upon Him," the mountain of the most supreme king comes,
You who love Mohammad, every evening love him passionately...
Sacrifice your body for him Fulfill your longing for the beautiful tomb,
Trembling, engrave your cup of devotion on the pure tomb,
This chance hardly comes often in your life.

Because...

Let's go, let's go, let's go aboard the boat [repeated ad lib.)
Be a pilgrim [repeated ad lib.]

Our cloaked master is in Medina

Let's go, let's go, let's go aboard the boat [repeated ad lib.]

Be a pilgrim [repeated ad lib.]

Let us fix the memory of Mohammad in our hearts,
Hold fast to the hope of his graciousness.
Come! We'll go to Medina and never return,
It's a pleasure, a pleasure, to die there.

Let's go, let's go, let's go aboard the boat [repeated ad lib.)
Be a pilgrim [repeated ad lib.]

Gulam told me that this qawwali was originally performed by the Indian singer Hira and that he learned it from a gramophone record. Medina, some distance from Mecca in Saudi Arabia, is the burial place of the Prophet Mohammad. It is properly called Medina al-Nabi, "The Prophet's City". Visiting Mohammad's tomb is not part of the highly prescribed ritual of the pilgrimage but is popular with pilgrims. This song would be more accurately described as a na't (a song about the Prophet), and this example lacks some of the usual features of Gulam's qawwali performance, including sections in fast tempo (dugun and tigun) and hand clapping. The chorus singing is rather underrecorded.

The performance starts with a qawwali dhun, part of the song melody rendered as an instrumental piece, with rhythmic accompaniment. Then Gulam sings some poetry which is musically unmetred and without rhythmic accompaniment. Then Gulam says "Because" and sings & chorus of the qawwali to the asthayi composition, then the verse to the award composition, and so on. Gulam reads the poetry from one of his song books. He probably does not sing this qawwali very often and he needs to refresh him memory. The song book is also a prop, something for Gulam, a rather shy and retiring man, to hide behind when performing, and he uses a song book even when performing songs he knows well. The song book has, I think, a further purpose. In qawwali great importance attaches to the text, usually a ghazal by a famous poet whose burial place may well be regarded as a holy shrine and place of pilgrimage. Such poems are in themselves quasi-sacred texts and importance is attached to their correct rendition. The song book affirms the accuracy of Gulam's performance. It suggests that he is literate, that he has learned the poetry from the written word, and that if in doubt he will refer back to the text.

Shot 31. Traveling shot up Oak Lane. 9 May 1986.

This is a strategy for getting out of the qawwali; in any case the audio tape ran out during Shot 30 so it was never going to be possible to come to a proper end. Since the text of the song is basically "Let's go! Let's go aboard the boat" it seemed appropriate to fade the song out over a traveling shot, which was filmed in Oak Lane, an Asian shopping street in Bradford to which we return in Shot 39. It is like leaving Gulam's house with the music still ringing in your ears. I had a recurrent problem with this shot, which proved difficult to follow. It seemed hard to get the sense that one had traveled anywhere. Shot 32 was found to provide a solution.

Shot 32. Pan across hills from the edge of Bradford. 21 May 1986.

Lessons from Gulam is a rather claustrophobic film, for much of the action takes place within the confines of small rooms. Here for once we get out of town and see the Yorkshire Dales in which Bradford is set.

Shot 33. Gulam, Shaukat and Norman have a picnic. 2 May 1996.

This shot was made early on in the shoot, when the musicians went to give a workshop in a school on the edge of Bradford. On the preceding day Andy and I went to look at the school and obtained permission to film there. Knowing that Gulam and his friends sometimes took food for a picnic if they had to travel far between morning and afternoon schools, we looked around for a suitable picnic spot on the way to the school. The next day we were able to conduct them to this place, and film while they had their food. This shot leads us into Scene 5.

Gulam's remark that he has to eat a lot because he has to play drums has been taken as a motif in Shot 48 to explain why he does not play music during Ramadan.

SCENE 5. THE TOUCHSTONE

Inter-title

THE TOUCHSTONE

"Still the heart is Hindustani"

A regular part of the Asian music workshop was to teach the children to sing the chorus from a famous Indian film song, "Mera juta hai Japani", originally sung by Mukesh in the film Shree 420 in 1955 (lyrics by Shailendra, music by Shanker Jaikishen). The text of the chorus says:

My shoes are Japanese
My trousers are English
The red hat on my head is Russian
But still the heart is Hindustani

I was intrigued by this song and noted that the children, Asian and English alike, seemed to learn it very quickly, even though the scale is quite un-Westem. I also hoped that the film audience would inwardly learn the chorus of the song through witnessing it being taught.

The location for this scene is again Pollard Park School, and the workshop was specifically set up for filming in co-operation with the headmaster. I had visited the school and found it had a high standard of classroom music, under the direction of an excellent young teacher. I wanted to be sure that the children we filmed would perform the song well. These particular children had not attended the previous workshops at the school on 2 May (the person who volunteers that he has heard the song before at the start of Shot 34 is the headmaster). It was also arranged that Shaukat would take part in this workshop rather than Champak.

Shots 34-36. Children team and sing "Mera-juta". 5 May 1986.

In Shot 34 Norman gets the children to translate the song line by line. One might expect this to be easy for the children, but for most of

them Urdu is not their first language, which is more likely to be Mirpuri (a dialect of Punjabi), Punjabi, or Gujarati. Some children learn Urdu in the mosque schools, and in certain upper schools it is taught as a foreign language (and elected for study by English pupils as well as Asian). Note that the boy who offers to translate the fourth line refrains from using the word Hindustani, which means Indian. He translates it as follows: "Still my heart is an Urdu heart, a Pakistani's heart".

Shot 34 continues with Norman teaching them the chorus, using hand gestures to indicate pitch levels, and in Shot 35 Shaukat sings one of the verses of the song:

Where is our destination? Where to stop?
Only He knows who is above.
We'll keep moving on like wanderers,
Like a river in flood.
The red hat on my head is Russian
But still the heart is Hindustani

In Shot 36 the children clap and sing the chorus to finish the song.

Shots 37-38. Shaukat's final song. 5 June 1986.

Norman introduces this, and Shaukat sings:

Stories of you will be on my lips,
Colorful images will be in my eyes.
I would wait for you with a restless heart,
And songs of our love would fill the world.
Banks of a river and cool, cool shade;
And songs of our love would fill the world.

Dawn and dusk I will worship you,
Songs of your love I will sing for you.
We will be together, hand in hand.
And songs of our love would fill the world.
Banks of a river and cool, cool shade;
And songs of our love would fill the world.

For the first time we see Norman playing the sitar, which perhaps encourages us to take his teaching more seriously. Shaukat sings well in this song and the sound is better (he has put the cover over the harmonium keys, which makes it quieter and less harsh). We see that he has, in a sense, passed the test. He can give a good performance, even if his audience has to be a captive class of school children.

At the end of the workshop, while we were packing up the instruments, PA, and film gear, Norman volunteered the following comments to camera:

Actually what we are doing is really highly political. Social comment.... The whole idea of modem multi-cultural education, really, is summed up in this "Mera Juta" song.... Basically, it was assumed that Pakistanis and Indians would dissimulate into the indigenous culture and become like English people. And the fact that outwardly they were wearing sort of Western dress and talking English and so on, it was assumed that inwardly they would also become English. But over the last ten years it became increasingly apparent they wouldn't do that. So this song Wera Juta Hai Japani", when it says my shoes are Japanese, etcetera, but my heart is Hindustani really sums up the acceptance of this cultural phenomenon, that in fact they're going to keep essentially their ethnic and cultural heart, although outwardly they may have the trappings of English culture.

In early cuts of the film these comments were used at the end of the film, as though to sum up, and in later cuts they were used simply to end this scene. They remained in the film almost to the final cut. I was asked to remove Norman's statement by the Director of the RAI, who felt that it might be misunderstood as suggesting that the RAI was committed to "multi-culturalism" as opposed to "anti-rac-

ism" (an important issue in British education in the 1980s). This view was supported by the Chair of the RAI Education Committee. I agreed to cut it out, but for cinematic rather than political reasons. Here Norman was playing the homespun sociologist. It is a quite different kind of statement to that made anywhere else in the film. If Gulam and Shaukat had made equivalent statements about ethnicity and life in Britain, it might have been possible to use this shot, but they had not. The effect was to distance Norman from the others, suggesting that in some ways he viewed them from afar, as cyphers rather than as people. All that remains of Norman's analysis is the title for the whole scene - "The Touchstone".

The question arises as to whether this song was deliberately used in the workshops because of its implications for multi-culturalism. It was selected from the musicians' repertory by Bradford's Music Adviser as a song that would be simple for children to learn. He told me that the message in the song that Norman detected had escaped his notice, and when shown an early cut of the film commented that Norman's remarks were simplistic. The original film version of the song is sung by a Chaplinesque tramp on the highroad, stick and bundle on his shoulder. His mélange of costume derives not from his "multi-ethnicity" but from the fact that tramps wear whatever they can come by. I have also been told that this song was often sung by the crowds at cricket matches in Karachi when Imran Khan came out to bat, on account of the many logos for Western and Far Eastern sports companies on his clothing!

SCENE 6. RAMADAN: THE MONTH OF FAST

Inter-title

RAMADAN: THE MONTH OF FAST
"Telling the white thread from the black"

Ramadan (or Ramazan as it is usually called in Bradford) is a tense period within most Muslim communities. Those who take the fast feel strong and virtuous in their Islamic identity; those who do not feel defensive and vulnerable to criticism. It therefore polarises the community. Some Muslims give up something in Ramadan, even if not submitting entirely to the rigours of the fast, which in the northern latitudes of Britain lasts 19 hours per day when Ramadan falls near mid-summer, as Gulam points out.

Ramadan is used at this point in the film to illustrate the thesis that "still the heart is Hindustani". It is presented as a month of abstinence from music - spiritual food - as well as from physical food. This is true of the specific case of Bradford in 1986 but should not be taken as representative of Islam in general. In Afghanistan, for example, Ramadan was a period of heightened musical activity (see Baily 1988:131-4), while in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan I found it was not. Gulam told me that in Africa music was also customarily played within the Muslim community during the nights of Ramadan. But in Bradford five hours of darkness was too short

to allow for such nocturnal musical activities; people were busy eating, going to the mosque, and eating again before starting the next day of fasting.

Shot 39. Pan down Oak Lane. 9 May 1986.

The Lister Mill is seen at the top of the street, which refers us back to Shot 2.

Shot 40. Shaukat outside his family's shop. 9 May 1986.

Some people take offence at the remark about the shop having "very competitive prices". feeling that this reinforces the stereotype of the mercenary Asian comer-shop keeper, but it is clear that Shaukat is parodying the stereotype.

Shot 41. A young boy buys sweets and leaves the shop. 9 May 1986.

The narration says:

Ramadan is now imminent. The people wait for tidings of the sighting of the new moon, which signals the beginning of the fast.

Shot 42. Shaukat talks about the fast. 9 May 1986.

Although the start of Ramadan is known to within a day in advance, the beginning of the fast is only pronounced when the new moon has first been sighted by prominent theologians. A certain amount of "play" is made out of this uncertainty, which also applies to the end of the fast. Ramadan may start on different days in different countries, and Muslims in England like to get the news from Morocco, a Muslim country at approximately the same longitude as the UK.

Shot 43. Shaukat talks about the fast. 9 May 1986.

Shot 44. Nasrah talks about the times for fasting. 9 May 1986.

Nasrah is Shaukat's sister and works as a nurse. She starts off telling us how one knew in the old days when to "close" and "open" one's fast (i.e. start and stop fasting each day) by whether it was light enough for one to distinguish between a white thread and a black thread.

Shot 45. Nasrah gives details about what to eat. 9 May 1986.

Shot 46. Children play in the street. 6 June 1986.

Inserted to indicate the passage of time and to allow for a short narration:

"On the twelfth day of Ramadan I visited Gulam, who is a devout Muslim.

One visitor from Karachi who saw this scene reported excitedly that the children are playing a Pakistani game, Iti Dunda, that he had

played when young but had hardly seen for many years. But a friend from Yorkshire tells me this is also an old English game.

Shot 47-48. Gulam at home during Ramadan. 21 May 1986.

Andy and I agreed that the kind of film we admired had its "moment of truth" towards the end, when the principal protagonist reveals something normally kept well hidden, usually an area of personal vulnerability or deep conviction. We spent a lot of time speculating how to get such a moment from Gulam and eventually settled on talking to him during the fast about being a Muslim. Here Gulam talks with great sincerity and compassion. Ramadan was a time when Muslim charities organised collections in the Asian areas of Bradford. The Khalifa Educational and Social Welfare Association, for example, collected money for "orphans, widows, disabled and 'poorer' members of the community" back in Gujarat. According to their leaflet:

Representatives of this Registered Charity will be calling upon you Insha-Allah! during the Holy Month of RAMADAAN to seek your spiritual, moral and financial support... May Allah make us all realise the true significance of this blessed month and accept our good deeds and give us sincerity in all that we do and reward you abundantly for your support. Ameen Summa Ammen!

Clearly Gulam has such ideas in the forefront of his mind in Shot 47.

In Shot 48 Gulam tells us that "we don't do the music in Ramadan, there is no strength left to play harmonium and tabla". Now this was not strictly true, the workshops continued into Ramadan (and my music lesson was also filmed in Ramadan, Shot 6), but he means that his band does not hold its regular Sunday rehearsals during Ramadan, nor do they get together to play in the evenings. This relates to his joking remark in Shot 33 that he needs to eat a lot because he plays drums.

SCENE 7. CELEBRATING THE END OF THE FAST

Inter-title

CELEBRATING THE END OF THE FAST
"What can I give you?"

We had waited in vain before Ramadan for the opportunity to film Gulam's band at one of its rare public appearances, and nothing had happened. Working to our alternative scenario we decided that we had to film some sort of musical festivity at the end of the month of fast, when the three day festival, 'Eid-e Ramadan, is held. I had witnessed a number of such festivals in Afghanistan and was curious to see how this was celebrated in Bradford. Gulam said we should go to his house. I decided to take a more active role in this musical performance and therefore requested Wayne Derrick (a student at the NFTS and the cameraman for my first film, Amir: An Afghan refugee musician's life in Peshawar, Pakistan) to come to Bradford and be sound recordist for these final shots.

This left me free to enter into the film without having to worry about technical matters.

Shot 49. John Daily arrives at Gulam's house. 8 June 1986.

The narration says:

'The first day of the 'Eid Festival at the end of Ramadan happened to be a Sunday. Gulam invited us all to his house for a special qawwali session."

This shot was completely set up. Not knowing the extent of gift-exchange for a Bradford 'Eid I went shopping to buy various presents for Gulam and his family, as though it was Christmas ('Eid was sometimes described as "our Christmas"). We arrived at Gulam's house, I checked that Gulam was at home, then, when the crew were ready, "arrived" again. One giveaway is that Gulam's front door is already open when I arrive, not usually the case at all.

Shot 50. Gulam dedicates a song. 8 June 1986.

Various relatives had arrived to visit Gulam and his special qawwali session was held upstairs in the house next door, perhaps to avoid further disruption of his living room, see Scene 4. This had recently been bought for Gulam's son Anvar to live in but was not yet fully furnished. A visiting relative from Blackburn joined in playing tabla. Quite unexpectedly Gulam tells me that he has composed a song in honour of "you and your colleague", which he then proceeds to sing:

What more can I give you than my heart,
So that my watchful eye might rest on you?

What more can I give you than my heart,
So that death might not be your lot?

A Pakistani friend has informed me that Gulam's song is typical of rural Mirasi musicians in the sub-continent, sung in honour of their patrons. Textually it is typical of the genre called nazarana, sung to avert the evil eye. The accompaniment is rather hesitant as the band has never practised this particular song before.

Shot 51. Norman below in the street. 8 June 1986.

Norman arrived half-way through the qawwali session, and appears in later footage. This shot is used to announce his arrival and reinforce the impression that a gathering of people is taking place. Over this shot these is a transition in the music from Gulam's "praise" song to the final song in the film "Mast Qalandar".

Shots 52-54. Gulam sings "Mast Qalandar". 8 June 1986

This song comes from the shrine of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, in Sehwan-e Sharif, Sind. It is often used to end a qawwali session, and is therefore appropriate for ending this film. It is very well known and has also been used in many Indian and Pakistani films. I requested Gulam to sing it midway through the session. The text, in a mixture of Urdu and Sindi, is:

Your henna is glowing with the reflection of your kingly being
And your presence as a reliever of suffering
O, Reliever of Suffering, take my boat to the other shore
My precious Saint of Sind, of Sehwan

Damadam Mast Qalandar*
Ali is in my every breath
Protect my self-respect

The true shrine, O, Saint, is yours
In me you have awakened the spirit of freedom
And together with my voice the gharial plays*
My precious Saint of Sind, of Schwan

Damadam Mast Qalandar
Ali is in my every breath
Protect my self-respect

Gulam sings with unusual power and enthusiasm, as though the long fast has indeed been a deprivation from music making. At this point in the film an interesting editing problem arose. For various technical reasons there was no footage showing Shaukat at this final qawwali session. He was present but not sitting near to Gulam, and there was a malfunction with the camera before any shots of him could be made. For cinematic reasons I felt it essential to end the film with Gulam and Shaukat in close proximity. My solution to this problem was perhaps ingenious, possibly unfair, and certainly untruthful. I used some footage that originated from the head of Shot 27 (27 April), when Shaukat arrives for the qawwali rehearsal, and cut it in to give the impression that Shaukat also arrived late at this final session. First we see him in the street below getting out of his car (Shot 53), equivalent to Norman's arrival earlier (though we are now shooting in the street), then cut back to Gulam (Shot 54), then back to Shaukat who asks shyly "Am I a bit late?" (Shot 55). Fade to black, with Gulam's singing carrying on over the credits.

Shaukat complained when he saw what I had done. "But I was there!" he insisted. I said I knew that he was but that because of our mistakes there was no footage and that it was essential that he appeared at the end of the film given that he was such an important part of it He accepted my explanation, but still felt it made him appear habitually unpunctual. Zemp has also objected to this device in his review of the film (Zemp 1988). 1 am satisfied with this ending, even though I accept its defects, because it demonstrates clearly the conflict between ethnographic and cinematic interests; ultimately, at least for this kind of film, the cinematic has to have priority. However, there is one sense in which I think Shaukat's remark is appropriate. He is "a bit late": he wants to be a good musician, but he does not come from a family like Gulam's where music nuking is taken for granted as an every day activity. And unlike his son lmran, he has not started to learn as a boy.

V. THE AFTERMATH

It is obvious that a film like Lessons from Gulam is just a slice out of the lives of the actors

in the drama, a configuration of people at a certain time and place caught up in the film maker's net. It is of some interest to see how things changed in the year or two after the film was shot.

Perhaps the most significant development was that Bradford Metropolitan Council set aside funding to appoint four peripatetic teachers of Asian music. Gulam was given one of these jobs; he told me the film had helped him because it brought his role as a music teacher in Bradford to the attention of some of the selection committee. Norman applied but was not given a position; the reason given was that the sitar was not deemed a suitable instrument to teach in school at this stage of the Asian music teaching program. Eventually another keyboard and two tabla players were appointed to the other jobs, all Asian and all from outside Bradford.

The personnel of Saz aur Awaz has changed a good deal. Tragically, Fakir, Gulam's brother-in-law, who plays the electric banju in the film, died. Shaukat started up another garage business and is doing very well. His friendship with Gulam came to an end soon after the film was made. Whatever the stated reasons, it seems to me that this friendship grew out of Shaukat's thirst for musical knowledge and practical expertise. Once he was back at his mechanical work - it being "in his blood" - the raison d'etre of the friendship was removed. Yusuf also gave up going to the qawwali rehearsals and Gulam has new members in his group. This points to the fact that the lessons he gives informally at home, mainly to members of his own community, may ultimately be of much more lasting effect than any teaching he does in school.

I hope that this film will prove to be of use to music educators, showing something of the life of music of the Indian Subcontinent in a contemporary British city, and that through watching the film one can learn a certain amount about the music itself, especially regarding the tabla drums. The film has had a mixed reception, especially from Indians and Pakistanis, who feel that I have done a disservice to Asian music by making a film about performers who do not adequately represent the lofty heights of virtuosity associated with this music. Such critics have, I fear, missed the point, which is to show something of Asian music making in a city like Bradford, where a musician like Gulam occupies an important place in the local scene.

Another point of criticism is that the film shows a rather low standard of Asian music education in Bradford schools. Moreover, according to these critics, one cannot learn anything useful about the music from the film, only faults to avoid in teaching it! My response to this criticism is that these were early days and represented the city's initial attempt to foster Asian music education in a period of acute budgetry restriction in the education sector. I thought Gulam and his team were doing something useful and I saw the enthusiasm with which the workshops were received by many children. I hope that the film communicates something of that, as well as presenting the principal actors as warm and charming people with an endearing passion for music.
January 1990

REFERENCES CITED

Baily, John
1988 Music of Afghanistan: Professional musicians in the city of Heart. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. With accompanying audio cassette.

1990 "Qawwali in Bradford: Traditional Music in the Muslim Communities", in Paul Oliver (ed), Black Music in Britain. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Ballard, Roger
1988 "The political economy of migration: Pakistan, Britain and the Middle East", in J.S. Eades (ed.), Migrants, Workers and the Labour Market. London: Tavistock.

Breitrose, Henry
1986 "The Structures and Functions of Documentary Film", The International Journal for Film and Television Schools, 2(1): 43-56.

Khan, Verity Saifullah
1977 "The Pakistanis: Mirpuri Villagers at Home and in Bradford", in James L. Watson (ed), Between Two Cultures. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Jones, Patricia D.
1984 An investigation into curriculum music in middle schools and the role of music in the lives of Muslim children, as a basis for development of a music education more relevant to a multi-cultural society. B. Ed. Dissertation, Bradford College, UK.

Michaelson, Maureen
1984 "Gujarati communities in Britain", Proceedings of a symposium on Gujarati Ethnicity in Britain, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt
1986 Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. With accompanying audio cassette.

Sakata, Hiromi Lorraine
1983 Music in the Mind: the Concepts of Music and Musician in Afghanistan. Kent: Kent State University Press.

Zemp, Hugo
1988 Review of Lessons from Gulam in Yearbook for Traditional Music, 20:257-260.

Notes

*The Leverhulme Film Training Fellowship Scheme was established in 1984, when the Royal Anthropological Institute invited applications for two training fellowships in the making of anthropological films, tenable at the National Film and Television School, Beaconsfield (located just to the west of London). The aim of the scheme, made possible by the grant from the Leverhulme Trust, was to train established anthropologists with an aptitude for visual anthropology, in the use of film, and to enable them to make at least one documentary film during their year's work. The scheme was intended to stimulate the tertiary education sector to provide facilities and finance for filming of this kind. The scheme ran for three years; the first two successful candidates were accepted for a second year of training, while in the third year two new fellows were selected.

*The Honeyford affair occurred in 1985. In 1989 Bradford gained further notoriety in connection with the Rushdie affair, when The Satanic Verses was burned outside the town hall by angry Muslims.

*These figures are very approximate. In about 1974 the population of Pakistanis was estimated at 30,000 out of a total city population of 300,000 (Khan 1977:57).

*The term "Asian music" here refers to the music of the Indian sub-continent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and to some degree Nepal and Afghanistan. This was the preferred term in Bradford, where to speak of "Indian music" posed problems for Pakistanis, as did "Hindustani music" (which usually refers to what the West commonly calls "North Indian classical music").

*Ghulam (literally "slave, servant") would be a more usual orthography for his name, but he himself writes it as Gulam and I follow his usage. For the transliteration of Urdu words I have used a simplified system. Sitar and tabla are rendered in Roman script rather than italics because these terms are now sufficiently familiar to have become Anglicised.

*It is worth noting that different Asian communities vary in respect to the degree they need music. Music is central to Sikh religious ritual, for the singing of the Holy Book has to be performed in a prescribed cycles of rags (melodic modes), and without musical training the effectiveness of the ritual is impaired. In Hinduism, music is highly revered and seen as a method of attaining samadhi, while in Islam the use of music for religious purposes is only advocated among certain Sufi Orders, most notably the Chishtidyya.

*For example, he tended to use the downstroke as the main stroke (as on plectrum guitar) rather than the upstroke.

*Ramadan is a month in the Islamic lunar calendar and consequently starts 10 or 11 days earlier each year, relative to the solar calendar.

*After a number of experiments in sound recording the Asian music workshops before the shoot started I decided to use several microphones and an SQN mixer, and to follow Norman and the children's speaking using a Sennheiser 815 ultra-directional microphone.

*The word bhai means "brother" and is commonly used as a term of affection and friendship.

*Compare: "People are believed to be born with innate qualities and aptitudes for particular occupations…each caste is believed to have an innate capacity for a specific occupation. A member of that caste will be far better at performing this type of work than people of other castes who take it up" (Michaelson, 1984).

*In order to make this word appear less strange in the inter-title I have written it as qawali rather than as qawwa1i.

*This line refers to the beating of the damal drums at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, when the devotees "dance" to the drum beat and enter into a state of ecstasy (mast).

*The gharial is another type of drum found at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

Film Credits

A film By
John Baily

Cinematography by
Andy Jillings

Produced by
the Royal Anthropological Institute and the National Film and Television School UK

Purchasing Information

B&W, 49 mins, 1986
Institution Sale $245.00
Consumer Sale $49.95
DVD/VHS
Contact DER for 16mm
rental and pricing

Study Guide Credits

Study Guide by
John Baily

Edited and Compiled by
Razan Alzayani

Study Guide Design by
Razan Alzayani

Contact Information

Documentary Educational Resources
101 Morse St.
Watertown MA 02472

800-569-6621 or 617-926-0491
http://www.der.org
docued@der.org