

Unearthing the Relics of Bigotry: A Historical Examination of Racial Prejudice and Intolerance Towards South Asian Communities in Australia

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Abstract

“Bigotry is an endemic feature of Australian life. From the arrival of Europeans in 1788 through to today, intolerance based on an array of grounds including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability have ruptured community relations and harmed those people subject to prejudice and discrimination.” Malcolm Campbell. Australia is regarded as one of the world's trans-diasporic societies, where people from different cultures, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and races dwell. Yet, the rise and persistence of bigotry has alarmed policymakers. This study investigates the rise and persistence of prejudice and intolerance within the Australian context towards South Asian communities, with a special focus on the Pakistani diaspora. It also aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of racism in Australian history. This study holds substantial importance as it enhances the wider discourse of race relations in Australia by shedding light on the experiences of historically marginalized South Asian communities. It will also address questions such as why Australians are still carrying out acts of bigotry towards non-white migrants and why bigotry is deeply rooted in mainstream politics. The article utilizes a critical historical analysis approach incorporating various primary and secondary sources, including historical records, personal accounts, oral histories, and archival materials.

Introduction

According to the Democracy Matrix a project funded by German Research Foundation (DGF), Australia ranks 13 in terms of rankings of countries by quality of democracy. A country that people always prefer as a top destination in living up their dreams of acquiring quality education, state-of-the-art health care, top job market, a country filled with plethora of flora and fauna with millions of species of animals, plateaus, and international sporting facilities, a nation with the most number of world cups in the history of international cricket. But, there is another side of this country that does not look good if we dig deep into its past history of being one of the racist nations of the world. We often observe that smaller groups in any part of the world are always been scapegoated by the majority. As a result, these groups endure physical violence, mental torture face social, cultural, economic, legal, and systematic injustices. Australia is a prime example where nationals from different continents, countries, or a region have treated indifferently and have gone through a deep-rooted hatred towards them. We are talking about non-white migrants, who for centuries have been facing bigotry from the host countrymen.

In mainstream politics, Mehreen Faruqi, the deputy leader of the Australian Greens, recently expressed her deep distress over the presence of racism and hate in Parliament. During a heartfelt

speech, she tearfully recounted how this week has been particularly painful, stating, "This place has broken me with its racism, its attacks on Muslims, Palestinian refugees, disabled people, and women. People tell me to develop a thick skin, but I refuse to do so." She added, "You might break me today, but I will get up, I will dust myself off, and I will be here tomorrow." Faruqi's emotional response highlights the ongoing challenges of confronting discrimination and bigotry within the political arena.

Literature Review

Scholars and experts worldwide have conducted a plethora of research in ethnic and racial studies. However, reviewing the previous studies also helps identify the gap in the literature from various angles and theoretical understandings of the topic. Significant research includes "Bigotry: An Australian History" by Professor Malcolm Campbell of the University of Auckland. His scholarly work serves as a guideline to understand bigotry in Australia not only from a historical perspective but also to understand our lives and communities better and work towards repairing the wounds of bigotry. (Campbell, October 2021). Amanuel Elias, Fethi Mansouri, and Yin Paradies'. "Racism in Australia Today" thoroughly analyses racism in Australia, covering its historical foundations and current expressions. The book examines media and public discourse, institutional racism, economic racism, and the social and economic effects of racism. It also underscores the racism that young people encounter as well as the global forces that influence racism, providing insights into the difficulties and progress in anti-racism initiatives. The writers thoroughly examine the topic using their knowledge of racial relations, social justice, and cultural diversity. (Amanuel Elias, 2021). Recent research has begun to focus more closely on the experience of South Asian communities, including the significance of gender in immigrants' experiences. For example, the paper "Pakistani-Muslim Immigrant Women in Western Australia: Perceptions of Identity and Community" explores the experiences of ten Pakistani women who moved in the 1970s. The study highlights the impact of religion, racism, social support systems, and gender roles on their identities and sense of community while also discussing the challenges faced by these women due to outside opinions and cultural opinions. (Sonn C., 2004). Studies focusing specifically on Pakistani immigrants are less common but provide important insights. For example, the study "Pakistani Diasporas, Culture, Conflict, and Change", edited by Virender S. Kalra, reveals the increasing intolerance and hate towards Pakistani diaspora post 9/11 in Australia, further deteriorating the integration process for the Pakistani community. (Kalra, 2007).

Research Design

This research, as indicated above, will unearth the relics and relatively recent experiences of bigotry in Australia towards South Asian immigrants. The nature of this research will be built upon the socio-historic, as it will include the cases and stories of South Asian immigrants from 1970 till date, who may have faced a significant rise in disengagement, frustration, and belonging. Relevant social research techniques, such as ethnography and epistemology for collecting empirical data, will be deployed, combined with qualitative and quantitative methods

utilizing historical documents, interviews, and oral histories (subject to ethics approval) alongside statistical data and policy analysis. This research will employ a mixed-method approach to generate in-depth insights from participants. The study will utilize a critical historical analysis methodology, emphasizing interpreting primary and secondary sources considering their historical milieu. The elements of disinformation and misinformation about bigotry will be analyzed from the social network platforms frequently used in Australia. The study will utilize digital archival resources by leveraging online databases, historical archives, and digital humanities tools such as SPSS and NVivo to gather and analyze data and engage with comparative historical studies of Australian migration with other countries to identify similar or unique dynamics.

Research Questions

- 1- To what extent do remnants of historical prejudice persist in recent and contemporary Australian society, and how do they continue to affect the South Asian communities, particularly in terms of social integration and identity formation?
- 2- How successful have the techniques and policies that Australia has used in the past to combat racial intolerance and prejudice, particularly as it pertains to South Asian communities?
- 3- In what ways does (i.e., in the past and the present) the lived reality of Pakistanis in Australia shed light on systemic prejudice and gender bias, and what kinds of discrimination have they faced specifically?
- 4- How has racial prejudice and intolerance towards South Asian groups in Australia evolved from colonial times to the present, and is the experience reflected in policy and social behavior?

Expected Findings

The expected findings are likely to uncover various aspects of historical bigotry against South Asian communities, with a particular focus on the Pakistani diaspora. The research will assess the effectiveness of both historical and contemporary policy recommendations aimed at combating racial intolerance and promoting peaceful coexistence, while identifying areas where further efforts are required. Additionally, the study will reveal specific forms of discrimination faced by the South Asian and Pakistani diaspora, including systemic injustices and gender-based bias, and examine the impact of these issues on their daily lives and sense of belonging. Furthermore, the research will highlight how the South Asian diaspora experiences hate by tracing the persistent patterns of bigotry that continues to affect Australia today. Finally, the study will explore how the experiences of South Asian communities, particularly Pakistanis, influence and reflect broader policy and social behaviors.

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