

The Mirpuris in Britain

People originating from the Mirpur district in Pakistan form about 70% of the British Pakistani population, which totals about 747,000. In Bradford, an industrial town in Northwest England, it is estimated that roughly three quarters of the foreign population are from Mirpur.

In the late 1950s & early 1960s, the Pakistani Government planned to build the Mangla Dam in the Mirpur area, and several thousand locals had to move. At that time, the British needed manpower for their textile factories. Many of the displaced Mirpuris moved to Britain and started working in factories. More than half the population of some villages moved to the UK to settle in the industrial towns. This rural, impoverished district provided cheap, unskilled labor for Britain in the 1960s and 70s.

Islam explained

Sunni Muslims claim to primarily follow the word of God in the Qur'an and the traditions concerning Mohammed instead of human leaders. (Sunnis number over 80% of all Muslims worldwide).

Shi'a (Shiite) Muslims believe that Mohammad designated his son-in-law, Ali, to succeed him as the leader of the Muslim faithful. They believe that the rightful leaders of Islam were the descendants of Ali. (Shiites make up about 15% of Muslims worldwide).

Most immigrants were from subsistence farming communities and had little or no schooling. One thing they brought with them was a long history of dispossession and marginalization. The partition of India in 1947 brought terrible bloodshed along with the division of Kashmir between Pakistan and India. (This was the issue cited until very recently as the most pressing political priority in the UK by the majority of British Muslims.)

The Mirpuris are still a very unreached people group. There are only a handful of known believers among them in Britain. Some of them have experienced much persecution and suffering. The home of one believing family was even set on fire recently.



A page from the Bible in Urdu

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *Pray that more British Christians would see the need to reach out to the Mirpuris. Pray also that Christian workers from around the world would be willing to come and minister among them.*
- ▶ *Pray for the few cross-cultural workers who are ministering among the Mirpuris, that they would have wisdom to know how to effectively reach them.*
- ▶ *Pray for the few Mirpuri believers, that they would be protected, and that they would be able to share the Gospel with cultural sensitivity and insight. Pray also for the establishment of fellowships of Mirpuri Muslim background believers.*