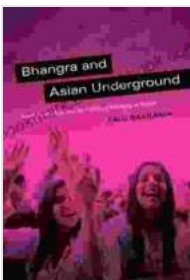


# South Asian Music and the Politics of Belonging in Britain: A Tapestry of Identity, Exclusion, and Empowerment

Music has always been a powerful force in shaping human identity and fostering a sense of belonging. In the context of migration and cultural exchange, music often becomes a vehicle for expressing shared experiences, preserving cultural heritage, and negotiating new identities in a foreign land.

The arrival of South Asians in Britain in the post-World War II era marked a significant chapter in the country's cultural landscape. Bringing with them a rich musical tradition rooted in classical, folk, and devotional music, South Asian migrants sought solace and connection through their beloved melodies.



## Bhangra and Asian Underground: South Asian Music and the Politics of Belonging in Britain by Jacqueline Mroz

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 2463 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 264 pages



**The Sound of Belonging: Bhangra and Bollywood**

In the 1960s, British-born South Asians began to fuse traditional Punjabi folk music with Western genres like rock and disco, giving birth to the electrifying sound of bhangra. With its infectious rhythms and celebratory lyrics, bhangra quickly gained popularity not only within the South Asian community but also among wider British society.

Similarly, Bollywood film music, with its captivating melodies, elaborate costumes, and larger-than-life dance performances, found a receptive audience among both South Asians and non-South Asians alike. Bollywood films and their music became a symbol of South Asian culture, providing a sense of shared identity for a diaspora navigating unfamiliar territory.

### **The Politics of Exclusion**

However, the rise of South Asian music in Britain was not without its challenges. In the 1970s and 1980s, as racial tensions escalated, South Asian communities faced prejudice and discrimination. This discrimination extended to their music, which was often dismissed as "noisy" or "foreign" by the mainstream.

South Asian musicians were regularly subjected to harassment by the police and local authorities, who often saw their performances as a nuisance. Bhangra concerts were frequently shut down or denied permits, reflecting the wider societal exclusion that many South Asians experienced at the time.

### **Resilience and Empowerment**

Despite the obstacles, South Asian music remained a source of strength and resilience for the community. It provided a space for self-expression, cultural affirmation, and collective mobilization. Through music, South

Asians could celebrate their heritage, challenge stereotypes, and demand recognition.

This resilience was exemplified by the emergence of South Asian music collectives and organizations, such as the Asian Music Circuit and the British Asian Music Association. These groups aimed to promote South Asian music, provide a platform for musicians, and advocate for the community's cultural rights.

### **The Shifting Landscape**

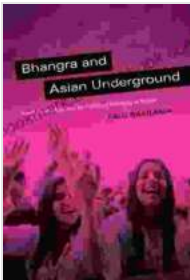
In the 1990s and beyond, the political and cultural landscape of Britain began to shift. Multiculturalism became more widely accepted, and South Asian music gained greater recognition and appreciation. This shift was partly driven by the rise of second- and third-generation South Asians, who embraced their cultural heritage while forging new paths in music.

South Asian musicians, such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Zakir Hussain, and Talvin Singh, achieved international acclaim, bringing South Asian music to a global audience. Bhangra and Bollywood music continued to evolve, incorporating elements from other genres and reflecting the hybrid identities of British-born South Asians.

South Asian music in Britain is a complex and multifaceted tapestry that reflects the lived experiences of a diaspora community. It has been a source of belonging, resilience, and empowerment, while also navigating the challenges of exclusion and discrimination.

Through its captivating rhythms, evocative melodies, and transformative power, South Asian music has played a pivotal role in shaping British

culture and society. It continues to bridge cultural divides, foster inclusivity, and inspire generations of musicians and listeners alike.



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