For more than 2000 years, people from South Asia have travelled and sojourned abroad. But it was only in the nineteenth century that sizeable South Asian communities were established as a result of widespread migration from this region to various settings throughout the world. The major movement of South Asian population to Britain was a post-war phenomenon, when the creation of the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947 caused a massive uprooting of population.

This period coincided with the period of massive demand for labour in a post-war Britain brought about by rapid industrialisation and economic expansion. Though numerous jobs were created, those located in the lower rungs of the hierarchy with low wages and poor working conditions, were shunned by the local white population. Thus, immigrants from South Asia were used to fill gaps in the lower orders of the British labour market. Most of them worked as unskilled, manual labourers in the textiles, steel, and transport industries. This community continued to grow over the 1950s and 1960s as an increasing number of South Asians from the subcontinent responded to the growing opportunities in Britain and migrated. However, the introduction of immigration control in the late 1960s and 1970s helped in checking the number of South Asians entering Britain. The next decade saw a further decline in their movement into Britain.
1. Relevance of the Study

The Asian community in Britain has been the topic of many well-defined studies and research. The literature on young Asian girls is however minimal. Most of the studies that have been undertaken portray them as passive recipients of a culture which is imposed upon them by their community. They are perceived as a group which remains largely uninfluenced by their sub-cultural locations and when faced with a cultural conflict situation either reconcile with the Asian way of life or accept a “double life” situation. Their role as agents of cultural change that has transformed the socio-cultural milieu to some extent has been ignored by most studies in this field.

In this context, a study of young Asian runaway girls, with their ‘deviant’ behaviour and complete rejection of the prescribed socio-cultural norms becomes important. By overthrowing parental and familial authority and control, they present an image which is diametrically opposite to the stereotypical “shy and subservient” Asian girl. Although numerically small, as a group they thus offer a tremendous opportunity to study a phenomenon which has so far remained a neglected area of academic research.

2. Aims of the Study

The study strives to focus on the socio-legal aspects of the problem of runaway girls in the Asian community of Glasgow. Its four-fold objectives are:

a) To explore the social, economic and cultural background of the respondents. By doing so it tries to underline the commonalties or variations that may or may not exist among the different groups that the respondents represent.
Besides, it also intends to sift out those features which may be regarded as contributory factors in the individual's decision to leave home.

b) To reflect upon the stresses and strains that emerge from living in a multicultural society. While inter-generational conflict forms a bulk of the discussion, what becomes significant is the fact that simple matters relating to clothes or entertainment become non-negotiable because the actors straddle two worlds. There are many who are adept at compromises and balancing two different sets of life-styles, but the study shows that issues of racism, poor self-image and pressures of an ethnic minority existence prevents others from bridging the chasm. The policies of the welfare state which undermines the authority of the family, also gives rise to a conflicting situation.

c) To discuss the legal aspects of the problem of runaway Asian girls and provide a brief debate on the way legislation and social policies affect their lives. The study also aims to demonstrate the involvement of the various agencies in this field and their dealings with the ethnic minority communities which brings to the fore the larger issues of effectiveness and success of the service providers vis-à-vis their target groups.

d) To analyse the various factors that cause the young girls from Asian families to leave home. To examine the influence, response and reaction of the community to this issue. The study aims to emphasise the role of the Asian community in particular, highlighting their attitude and efforts towards this problem.
3. Methodology

The research into the study of young Asian runaway girls delved into two specific areas which are considered to be more sensitive or threatening than others. These were the intrusion into the private sphere or deep personal experience of the participants and secondly, it was concerned with deviance and social control. Research involving private behaviour and also behaviour that is widely condemned is highly sensitive and difficult to execute. The more sensitive or threatening the topic under examination, the more difficult sampling is likely to be because potential participants have a greater need to hide their involvement. As the target population was hidden in nature, no census-based sampling frame nor any other reliable source was available to define and randomly sample subsets for this study. The social construction of leaving home as a private problem combined with the personal difficulty many people feel about speaking of traumatic experiences in public decreased the likelihood of girls coming forward to participate in my research. Thus selection and recruitment of study participants became an acute problem for my research.

In order to combat these problems, I used the strategy of drawing respondents from a number of different sources, realising that the resulting sample would not be random but might include diverse segments of the runaway population. The approach was a combination of: a) recruitment from diverse sources, and b) personal referral into the sample by these individuals recruited through these sources. Personal referral is a method whereby respondents who have already participated in the research send other individuals, who are a part of their personal network, to participate in it. The rationale for using this combination of methods was that recruitment from a variety of sources would help to ensure a broad cross section of respondents, while personal referrals provided by the individuals recruited through these different sources would give a more diverse sample.
The various sources that were used to recruit participants for this research were the hostels and refuges meant for the young and homeless, social workers who worked with this group, community and outreach workers who had contact with young Asian runaway girls and Sahara, an organisation which wanted to establish a hostel especially for young runaways belonging to the ethnic minority community.

As for persona referral, at the conclusion of each interview, respondents were asked whether there were other girls they knew who would participate in this research. Through follow-up phone calls made to each respondent, I could ascertain whether their friends were willing to participate in this study. It was only after they confirmed their willingness that their addresses and telephone numbers were passed on to me.

Privacy was very important in this research. In the majority of the cases, I met and interviewed the girls either in their homes or in a private room at the refuges in which they resided. The location of the interview was an important factor for the obvious reason of maintaining anonymity but it also proved to be significant for other reasons as well. First of all, it would be extremely difficult to have an in-depth conversation about such a sensitive and often emotional topic without the benefit of privacy. More importantly, a certain type of interaction was established when interviews were conducted in the privacy of the participants' home. By this I mean that when I entered a girl's flat, a special relationship was established primarily because she felt comfortable in her home and in control of the situation. Rather than my setting the agenda, each girl determined the general rules of the interaction, such as where we would talk, when we would have a break for tea/coffee, and so on. This was an important element of establishing an interactive relationship because, rather than taking a passive role and following my lead, each girl played an active role as a hostess. In fact, the girls went to great lengths to be hospitable by offering me beverages and snacks. On some occasions I was asked to
join them for dinner, have coffee in a cafe after the interview and twice they offered to walk me down to the tube station.

A combination of methods was used including questionnaires, interviews and case studies. The questionnaires were structured to ensure that all the respondents were replying to the same set of questions. Some of the questions presented a fixed alternative answer so that the respondent chose the appropriate one. But most of the questions were open-ended in order to elicit a free response from the girls so that they could answer in their own terms with their own frame of reference. As a result, I had to be alert and sensitive in order to be able to take cues from the person being interviewed and to suit the interviewing style to the individual concerned. While some of them spoke at length about their experiences, others answered in monosyllables. Most of the latter were girls who had left home just a few months before the interview and were perhaps still coming to terms with their decision.

Questions broadly dealt with identifying information, investigating the social, economic, cultural and the family background of the girls, exploring the reasons for leaving home and its consequences, determining the legal aspect of the issue and ascertaining the involvement of the community, and the statutory and voluntary sectors in the problem. At the end of the questionnaire, there was a question that sought advise/opinion of the respondents regarding the topic. Some of the comments made by them were insightful and were incorporated in the study.

Questionnaires were mailed to hostels, refuges and community and social workers who passed it on to their contacts. Mailed questionnaires seemed to be an appropriate method to reach girls who had no objection to filling in a questionnaire but refused to meet me personally. I interviewed those who agreed to see me by personally administering the questionnaires and supplementing them by questions in order to clarify inadequate answers or to elicit more detailed responses. No two
respondent might perhaps have experienced exactly the same interview, but I learnt the experiences and problems of leaving home from all of them.

The problem of runaway Asian girls is complex in nature. For a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, the use of the case study method became necessary. Eight representative cases of runaway girls were used to generate case material. The data thus collected was extremely useful in tracing and exploring the factors that accounted for the respondents' behaviour pattern. It also helped in analysing their relationship with the forces involved in their surrounding milieu.

The total sample of this study includes 42 respondents. Of these, 12 questionnaires were mailed to the respondents, while the rest were administered to the respondents in person. In addition to this, 14 interviews were also conducted with members of organisations and agencies who either directly dealt with the runaway Asian girls or were involved in the homeless field. These included community relations officers, community workers, outreach and development workers, case workers and project staff of residential accommodations for the homeless. Apart from offering invaluable information on the nature and working of their organisations, these interviews helped in broadening the perspective of my topic by providing the response and feedback of the state, the community and the family to the problem.

4. Problems

The basic problem of this study emanated from the sensitive nature of the topic. Lee and Renzetti (1993: 5) define a sensitive topic as, “one that potentially poses for the involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data.” Such topics present problems because research
into them involves potential costs to those participating in the research. On the one hand, these may take the form of psychic costs, such as guilt, shame or embarrassment. Alternatively, sensitive topics are threatening because participation in research can have unwelcome consequences, this in turn, has obvious detrimental effects on levels of reliability and validity and raises a concomitant need for ethical awareness on the part of the researcher. Finally this type of research can be threatening to the researcher as well as the researched. For instance, on some occasions I was filled with a deep sense of guilt when I saw that my questions and their subsequent answers had emotionally disturbed my respondents. At least three of my respondents indicated that the questions put to them evoked unpleasant memories of their past and left them feeling depressed for days, while others spoke of it as a catharsis. Interviews also left me drained with a sense of being burdened by my respondents’ unfortunate experiences.

To overcome the disturbance I adopted the method of self-disclosure or reciprocity not only to overcome the participant’s inhibitions but also to place the interaction on a “more equal footing.” I would talk about my life in India, particularly my experiences of growing up as a young woman in the subcontinent. I would try and answer, as honestly as possible, my views on life in Britain, the problems I faced in Glasgow and whether I would like to live there permanently. The basic idea was to share with them some of my experiences so that I became less of a stranger and there was greater understanding and mutuality in the in-depth interviewing situation.

Another problem in this study was related to issues of privacy and breach of confidentiality. Even under conditions where anonymity was guaranteed some girls did not believe it or fully understood how it would be achieved. As a result, they refused to participate in the research. For others, who participated in the study it was difficult or perhaps even impossible to ensure that they provided honest answers to questions.
This research was involved in the collection of data at one time point by noting current behaviour and asking the respondents for a self-report of their background. The problem with this retrospective is that people have trouble recalling the time period in which events occurred, their reactions and their experiences.

The sensitive character of the topic also acted as a constraint when it came to seeking permission from powerful “gatekeepers” of institutions. In one hostel for the young and homeless, I was told by the officer in-charge that instead of talking to researchers, they wanted their residents to “get on with their lives” and forget the past. On another occasion, a community worker said that her clients were exhausted from talking about their experiences. She said that there was a perception among them that researchers came into their homes, asked a whole lot of questions, took what they wanted and were never seen again.

The best strategy for protecting the sensitivities of research participants was to design an ethical and culturally sensitive research and to interpret findings tactfully and judiciously. It was also important to communicate openly with the participants and to respect their autonomy and life styles. Before the start of each interview I debriefed the respondents about the nature of the research and also explained the value of their participation in it. In the case of mailed questionnaire a covering letter was used.

Race is an important issue in all research as it structures the perception of most aspects of an individual’s life. The fact that my research participants and I were of the same race and came from the same region of the world enabled us to establish rapport far more easily than say, if I had been a white researcher. In their eyes, as an Asian I had the required background which made me competent enough to understand their experiences. As one respondent said, “A white person can never
understand these ideas and notions, the ins and outs of the everyday Asian life as they have never been touched by these experiences."

While being an Asian was a favourable factor, the fact that I came from India and was planning to return also worked to my advantage. I believe that at least some of the respondents readily shared their life stories with me because I was not a part of the small Asian community of Glasgow. My age also helped me to gain access to my respondents as I belonged to the same generation as them.

These were some of the factors that helped me in conducting my research and in establishing a rapport with my respondents. However, I was also aware of the dangers of over-rapport which could hinder objectivity. While it was not always possible to adopt a neutral and uninvolved approach I tried to stay within the confines of an interactive research process where I assumed the role of an empathetic listener.

5. Review of Literature

In exploring the entire gamut of studies that have been conducted on the Asian diaspora to Britain, it becomes evident that certain themes and issues have dominated the substantive research done in this field. To begin with, the reasons for migration process and factors and patterns of settlement seemed to be main focus of the study of most researchers in the 1960s and the 1970s. Rose and Deakin (1969), Krausz (1972), Aurora (1967), the Ballards (1977) and Anwar (1979) have outlined the major influences of Asians to Britain and the reasons behind the steady flow of population from the subcontinent to Britain. A general consequence of their settlement in Britain for this period, in which individual male members arrived and found work, lived together in shared houses and gradually brought over their family members to re-establish their individual households is
also drafted in these works. With the radical Africanisation programmes introduced in East African countries of Kenya and Uganda in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new kind of Asian community arrived and settled in Britain. Bhachu (1985) described them as the twice migrants.

The problem of migration and its social structure was based on lines of kinship and village ties, thus the feature of chain migration became important in explaining the transplantation of immigrants in this period. Dahya (1973) and Jeffrey (1976) have discussed this phenomenon in their respective studies. The migrants’ ties with the subcontinent remained strong even after they were joined by their immediate family members in Britain. (Kelly (1990) and Robinson (1990) explain how marital alliances, kinship networks, religious beliefs and economic ties including remittances kept them connected to their extended families in their home and country.

In the economic field, Robinson (1988) points out that for most of the Asians the shift from manual labour livelihoods in industries, foundries and transport to middle-class occupations of retailing and catering is only marginal. The “twice migrants” from East Africa seemed to have fared better than the others in their business enterprise as they had the experience as well as the capital to invest in these activities (Bhachu 1985).

The cultural composition of the Asian community in Britain and the fact that most of the migrants have originated from certain pockets of the subcontinent has been the subject of many studies. Anwar (1979), Dahya (1973), Shaw (1988), Jeffrey (1976), Saifullah Khan (1976, 1977, 1979) have all accounted for the Urdu-speaking Pakistanis who comprised two-thirds of the Muslim population of Britain. The balance is made up of Bangladeshis (Carey and Shukur 1985) and Gujarati or Punjabi Indians. Desai (1963), Tambs-Lyche (1980), Hahlo (1980), Kelly (1990) have touched upon various aspects of the life of the Gujaratis who constitute two-
thirds of the Hindu population in Britain. The remainder is composed of equal proportion of Punjabis and other Indians. The Sikhs, who comprise just over 20 per cent of the Asian community have been studied extensively by Aurora (1967), Bhachu (1985), the Ballards (1977), Brooks and Singh (1979-80), Pettigrew (1972) and Helweg (1977). Many of the above mentioned groups are twice migrants with experience in East Africa. The complexity of South Asian community has led Robinson (1986) to define no less than twelve religious-ethno-linguistic groups present in Britain. Interestingly, Ballard (1990) points out that groups that originate from regions less than 200 miles apart but are culturally and religiously different have experienced different patterns of migration and settlement. But Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities which profess the same Islamic religion, have also not followed the same trajectory of migration. Rose and Deakin (1969) enumerate the different patterns of settlement of these two communities in Britain. It is therefore difficult to conceptualise the Asian community in Britain as a single homogeneous concrete community. Nationality, religion, region, language and caste often create fission which leads to the emergence of sub-groups.

Although the recreation of a caste system, as we understand the term, never really took place among the migrant communities in Britain, awareness of caste membership was maintained either through self-proclaimed pride or through accusations about other people's low status. However, for the most part, caste differences are submerged within other more obvious differences, such as linguistic and regional identity. Exclusive practices and associations have developed among overseas Hindu groups. Barot (1987) and Nye (1993) report that Hindu temples are not pan-Indian in character but are instead based around more specific regional ties, for instance Punjabi temples, Bengali and Tamil temples.

The nature of ethnic pluralism, the political responses of the government to a multi-cultural society and the place of the Asian community within it, has also
found considerable attention in the literature on Asian minorities residing in Britain. While institutionalised racism and the low position of Asians in Britain's class structure is widely accepted, what remains debatable is the basis for the close association between race and class among Asians in Britain. While some attribute it to local settlement histories, Rex (1982), Berghe (1978), Armstrong (1989), and Huttenback (1976) explain it as a legacy of the long history of imperialism and colonialism and the migratory trends in its aftermath.

The media, the educational system and the popular literature too played an important role in transferring and internalising the attitudes of superiority that existed among the colonisers to the mass of the population in Britain. The net effect of all this was that generations of Britons learnt and believed that Asians were different and were subordinate to them, while they were their natural masters and teachers.

Since the 1970s and more so in the 1980s, Britain moved towards a policy of multiculturalism whereby programmes were designed and institutional structures were created to combat discrimination, and foster equality and equal opportunity among the ethnic minorities. But as Vertovec (1996) has pointed out, the good intentions of the administrators notwithstanding, many of the initiatives in the name of multiculturalism have actually excluded the minorities rather than facilitated their participation in the public domain. This was mainly due to a simplistic view adopted by the administrators in their assumption that communities could be served through a dialogue with its representatives or organisations which were created by the state. They failed to recognise that the interests of the communities could be served more effectively if the communities organised themselves through grassroots formations and worked through these channels in negotiating for their demands. Such organisations besides promoting inter-ethnic alliances foster cooperation among the minorities who are otherwise engaged in competing with each other for limited provisions. This model of multiculturalism assumes a greater
significance in the backdrop of the increased participation among the Asians in the political sphere. As Anwar (1990) and Shaw (1988) have shown, besides being active in the political arena, Asians are increasingly getting involved in community development and in the establishment of a range of organisations.

The role and status of Asian women, their issues and concerns and their strategies of adjustment have been discussed by Saifullah Khan (1975, 1979) and Brah (1985, 1992, 1996). Afsar (1989), Bhachu (1991), Parmar (1990) and Ahmed (1986) discuss the life experiences of Asian women and the way their social reality articulates with the economic, political and cultural modalities which mark the interrelationship between race, ethnicity and gender.

The question of identity formation among the Asian youth who are confronted with difficult and culturally stressful life style choices has been the subject of discussion among many scholars. Ballard (1979), Weinreich (1979), Taylor (1976) and Parmar (1990) have all addressed young Asian people's experiences, the influences in their lives, and the cross-pressures which bear upon them.

Although this review is by no means exhaustive in nature and only attempts to draw out the main issues and themes which are prevalent in the literature on British Asians, its brief perusal reveals a certain gap in knowledge in at least certain aspects of the Asian community's life in Britain.

The first of these gaps appears when we go through the research undertaken on Asian girls. While there are studies that focus on diverse issues of ethnicity, culture and identity of second generation Asians, the subject of young Asian girls remains largely unexplored. Whatever literature exists, portrays them as passive recipients of their culture who live within its framework and remain isolated or unchanged from the dynamics of external influences and local trends. Leave aside deviance, there is little perception of Asian girls as transformers and reformulators of the
cultural values of their community. Their role as active agents of change has either been ignored or unreported in the majority of the literature.

While there is no dearth of literature on Asians residing in England, their life in Scotland has not attracted the same attention among scholars. Research has been conducted on the historical background of Asian migration to Scotland by Dunlop and Miles (1990), McFarland (1991) and Mann (1992). K. Elahi (1967) has studied the patterns of social adaptation and so the behaviour of the Pakistani community in Glasgow while Srivastava’s thesis (1975) examines the distribution of the Asian community in Glasgow, describes their spatial evolution and recognises the patterns and processes involved in their residential mobility. But by and large, the profile of Asians as a community and their participation in the mainstream society of present day Scotland has received scant attention among sociologists and social anthropologists alike.

The third aspect of the Asian community’s life in Britain which has not received its due from scholars and researchers relates to their dealings with the social services or the social work department of the government. The general perception that social services should not interfere with minority cultures and should adopt a non-interventionist perspective in their approach to Asian families might perhaps be responsible for the lack of work done in this field.

This thesis which studies the problem of runaway Asian girls in Glasgow by adopting a socio-legal perspective, makes a serious attempt to bridge the gap in information on the Asian community which have been identified above. In doing so, it tries to contribute to and supplement the body of knowledge that already exists in this field.
6. Chapterisation

The present study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the topic of research and outlines the relevance and the aims of the study. It also discusses the methodological approach adopted and the basic problems that emerged during the course of the research. A brief review of the literature is also provided in this chapter.

The second chapter traces the historical background of immigration from the subcontinent to Britain with special emphasis on migratory trends prevalent in Scotland and Glasgow. It also gives a brief summary of the main communities that migrated from some of the regions of the subcontinent and the various "push and pull" factors that operated in each case. The discussion on the demographic composition of the structure, age and class of the Asian population in Glasgow with reference to the 1991 Census comes next. This is followed by an outline of the immigration of women and children from the Indian subcontinent, the various features of their life in Britain, and its widespread ramifications on their daily existence.

The third chapter delves into the socio-legal implications of the runaway Asian girls in Glasgow. By considering them as homeless, it places them within the legal framework. The definition of "homelessness" and the social policies of the welfare state regarding this issue have been discussed. The laws governing homelessness, the agencies that deal with it and the cash benefits that can be claimed by the homeless have been enumerated next. The penultimate section of this chapter debates the view that the state by providing for the young and the homeless through its numerous agencies aids the growth of a climate of dependency among them. Implicit in this is the assumption that young people leave home unnecessarily in order to exploit and abuse the provisions of the welfare state. The concluding section extends this argument to draw within its fold the Asian community and
demonstrates the ways in which the state comes in conflict with the institution of family. A discussion on the argument that by “encouraging young people to leave home,” the state threatens and undermines the authority of the family vis-à-vis its individual members is also included in this section.

The statistical data of the sample of 42 respondents is provided in the fourth chapter. Tables have been used to present the information on religion, ethnic origin, family background, education and the reasons for leaving home. With the help of statistical means, an attempt has been made to evaluate the level of awareness among the respondents regarding legal rights and statutory services and their experiences of such services. Further, various aspects of the respondent’s life at the time they filled out the questionnaire/ participated in the interview, like for instance, dealing with employment, or lack of employment, their current relationship with their families, etc., is also recorded in this chapter.

The next chapter is devoted to a detailed and in-depth discussion of eight representative cases of runaway Asian girls including five Pakistanis, and one each from the Sikh, the Hindu and the Bangladeshi communities. The discussion is based on the qualitative data collected during the course of my interviews with the respondents. Each of these case studies describes the life history of the individual and gives a detailed account of their social, economic, religious and cultural background. While issues of identity, racism and gender discrimination have been discussed, factors that caused the respondents to leave home make the core of each case study. Apart from a general description of the course of events and issues both general and particular, the role and involvement of the voluntary and statutory agencies in each case is also accounted for.

The sixth chapter provides a detailed analysis of the discussion presented so far regarding the problem of runaway Asian girls. The first section deals with the main variables highlighted in chapters 4 and 5 including the ethnic, social, religious,
economic and educational background of the girls and their parents. The working of the statutory agencies especially in their dealing with the Asian community in general and the runaway girls in particular is also emphasised upon. The second section focuses on the fundamental question of girls leaving home and the various factors that contribute to this phenomenon. The issues of racism, cultural identity, its construction, reinterpretation and conflicts and gender discrimination are discussed in the next section in as far as they shape the lives of the respondents of this study. The last section concentrates on the role of the community and its response, and reaction to the problem of runaway Asian girls. It also highlights the similarities and differences between runaway girls from the Asian and the indigenous Scottish communities.

The seventh chapter, which is the concluding chapter, places the summary of the findings in a wider context. It provides a profile of the runaway Asian girls, and focus on certain issues and tendencies. It also points out the limitations of the present study and the broad areas that demand further research.