Afghan-Hazara Migration and Relocation in a Globalised Australia

Aidan Parkes (ORCID)

Centre for Arab & Islamic Studies, College of Arts & Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra 0200, Australia; aidan.parkes@anu.edu.au

Abstract: This study examines a set of unique isolated lived-experiences to offer some general observations concerning Afghan-Hazara migration, relocation, and individuation in Australia. Culture may have the appearance of immutability. However, like any social formation, it is produced, reproduced, and contested through time. Everyone is an individual, and while we speak of the impact and culture, lived-experience is very different. People always have choices they can make about what lessons they might derive from experiences. If one faces discrimination within the realm of the state, which is historically well documented where Hazaras are concerned, one begins looking for alternative pathways to advancement. These include personalised networks in religious communities, education, and business entrepreneurship. The study analyses the fluid nature of belief systems, and the multiplicity of ways lived-experience shapes individuation and reshapes identity through pathways to advancement in a globalising Australia.

Keywords: migration; religion; identity; lived-experience; entrepreneurialism

1. Introduction

> Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of the dream house is opposed to that of the childhood home . . . . Maybe it is a good thing for us to keep a few dreams of a house that we shall live in later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it. For a house that was final, one that stood in symmetrical relation to the house we were born in, would lead to thoughts—serious, sad thoughts—and not to dreams. It is better to live in a state of impermanence than in one of finality.
>
> —Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space.* 1958, p. 61.

Bachelard's characterisation of the "house" and its impermanence relates to the way people are living simultaneously in a multiplicity of social worlds at any one time. These multiplicities of social worlds can exist in several ways and are not necessarily problematic. However, the liminality between these social worlds can become a more serious issue where migration is concerned. *Ali* is a 22-year-old businessman and sportsman of great skill living in Brisbane. He is of Afghan-Hazara heritage but was born in Quetta, Pakistan and migrated to Australia with his family in 2012. When *Ali* was 18 years old, he represented Australia at the highest junior sporting level in Europe. Before the competition, team members tricked *Ali* into entering a "red light" district.[1] Perturbed and disgusted, *Ali* covered his eyes and begged Imam Hussain for forgiveness: "Everything is Haram". This event

---

1   Names have been changed as is common ethnographic practice.

was one of many disturbingly transversal conflicts in identity, problematising the multiplicity of new social settings *Ali* was forced to navigate. This paper focuses on understanding the relationship between religious belief systems, identity, and migration through lived-experiences in new social worlds. Applying a sociological ethnographic method of inquiry, this paper analyses the experiences of a cohort of individuals in order to offer some generalisations about religion, politics, and society. *Ali's* parents, *Zaynab* and *Abdullah*, were displaced by the Taliban from their home province of Uruzgan in Afghanistan in 1996, finding liminal refuge in Quetta, Pakistan. After decades of systematic discrimination and persecution, *Abdullah* embarked on a perilous pathway to advancement for his family to Australia. *Abdullah's* experiences in this period of liminality are beyond the scope of this paper. Fortunately, the stories of *Abdullah* and *Zaynab's* globalised children: *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa,* and their experiences with alternative pathways to advancement in Australia offer the most consequential inflections of their parents' sacrifice.

2. Background

Ali and his family are ethnic Hazaras and ethnic Hazaras make up the vast bulk of Afghan refugees who have arrived in Australia in the last 20 years. Most Afghan Hazaras are from Hazarajat, which is in central Afghanistan. With rich cultural traditions predating Islam, Hazara culture also squared well demographically to the adoption of Shi'ism. The 8th century Arab geographer of the Islamic Golden age, al-Maqdisī, named Hazarajat *Gharjistan*, meaning "mountain area ruled by chiefs" (Mousavi 1998, p. 39). However, Hazaras have experienced systematic persecution and marginalisation from the political process in Afghanistan, occupying the lowest stratum in a deeply fragmented society (Barfield 2012; Rubin 1995; Maley 2002, 2008, 2016; Rashid 2002; Ibrahimi 2017). If one faces discrimination within the realm of the state, one begins looking for alternative pathways to advancement. The literature on pathways for advancement in the context of Hazara refugees identifies several pathways. One traditional pathway is personalised networks within the Hazara community. Two non-traditional pathways, which draw on the empowering features of globalisation, are education and business. Education and business represent pathways for advancement, which can create certain opportunities outside the sphere of the state. Due to the centuries of systemic oppression Hazaras endured in Afghanistan, these pathways for advancement have been historically favoured.

This family's journey took them from Uruzgan in Afghanistan, to Quetta in Pakistan, and from Quetta to Logan in Australia. Due to entrenched divisions within diasporic communities in Logan limiting perceived pathways to advancement, the family later relocated. Displaced from familiar spaces and marginalised within new diasporic communities, the family sought various pathways transcending traditional realms of advancement. A generational distinction indicates that the Hazara youth born during the era of globalisation gravitate towards education and business as means of advancement. Globalisation enhances the salience of education as a pathway of advancement in a similar way to business. Hazaras are also drawn to business due to their malleability to entrepreneurialism (Collins et al. 2017). Successful businesspeople cannot afford to be discriminatory in their actions because they tend to miss entrepreneurial opportunities themselves if they discriminate on economically irrelevant grounds, such as perceived race, ethnic background, or sectarian affiliations. Hazara identity is well-constructed to identify and avoid these distorting prejudices due to their own experiences with discrimination.

It is extremely difficult to generalise the migration experience of Afghan-Hazaras in Australia. The migration process and refugee experiences with "othering" are radically unique and inherently subjective. Therefore, this study focuses on a set of unique isolated experiences of Afghan-Hazara refugee migrants in Australia. The analysis uncovers fluid engagement with religious identity, differentiated social worlds, and divergent pathways to advancement through lived-experience. Across the participants surveyed, the theme of fluid belief systems links identity, belonging, nationalism, religiosity, and purpose with personal advancement in Australia. Interplay between belief systems and kin structures also plays a role in identity construction of participants. The study reveals that despite

being of the same family and upbringing, the three children pursue divergent pathways for advancement as a result of lived-experience. The eldest seeks meaning through religion and pilgrimage (*ziyarat*). The middle child finds purpose and identity through sports and entrepreneurialism. The youngest child becomes critical of religion and religious institutions, finding purpose and identity through individuation. The study highlights very distinct pathways not just occupationally but ideationally as well. Each engaged in a multiplicity of social worlds, where participants share different world views. This militates against any type of homogenising view of Hazaras in Australia. These do not reflect generational scale differences. Rather, different socialisation experiences in Australia demonstrate that people adjust to the social worlds they enter and are not fixed in their ways.

3. Methodology: Reflexive Sociological Ethnography

This study used a method of sociological ethnography involving extended synchronous and asynchronous, structured and semi-structured interviews, to unpack dominant themes drawn from the experiences of a deeply spiritual Shi'i Afghan-Hazara refugee family. Ethnography is a method for understanding social practices and interactions through systemic study of individual cultures. Sociological ethnography can be divided into two broad camps: Grounded theory (GT) and extended case method (ECM). GT seeks to uncover generic explanations through similarities. By contrast, ECM treats complex narratives of social worlds as "cases", analytic units for understanding an empirical phenomenon through multiplicity. According to Burawoy (1998), the ECM "applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro", and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory" (5). Therefore, ECM enables theory to illuminate a specific ethnographic case, revealing how lived-experiences in micro-level social settings relate to macro-level sociological phenomena. Describing the approach, Gluckman (1961, pp. 9–10) proposes taking:

> "a series of specific incidents affecting the same persons or groups through a period of time, and showing how these incidents, theses 'cases' are related to the development and change of social relations among these persons and groups, acting as a framework within their social system and culture."

Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Hazara Australians, Hetz and Radford (2020) examined the negotiation of identity between Hazara (ethnic), Afghan (homeland), Muslim (religious), Australia (host nation), and refugee (former). Using a similar approach, participants in this study describe divergent pathways for advancement in differentiated social worlds. While themes of religion and culture inhere, individuation through lived-experience is the primary implication observable across the study. The ECM was implemented and iteratively refined across a three-month period involving a series of dialogues with three Afghan-Hazara male siblings, conducted over telephone and email. Central to the study were issues of religiosity, identity, individuation, and pathways to advancement in Australia. The research is significant to public policy issues, including refugee migration, diasporic communities, and cultural integration. Refugee ethnography provides instructive micro-scale observations capable of informing macro-scale policy practices. Furthermore, ethnographic refugee research plays a crucial role in balancing the securitisation of refugees in academic and political discourse. The research contributes to the scholarly literature on lived-experiences of refugees in Australia, the process of individuation, and the fluidity of identity.

4. Context: Afghan-Hazara Belief Systems and the Culture Stripping Process of Migration

4.1. Diasporic Communities in Australia and the Culture Stripping Process of Migration

In both print and digital media, politically conservative wings of Australian media, such as News Corp and its subsidiaries, frequently problematise diasporic communities. Diaspora communities are portrayed as disorderly and culturally incongruent with Australian values. Lebanese communities in

western Sydney and Sudanese communities in Melbourne are constructed as groups promoting cultures incompatible with Australian values. Humphrey (1992, 2001) redresses this misconception by arguing that migration itself is a culture stripping experience. Studying Lebanese diaspora communities in Australia during the 1970s, Humphrey argues that this culture stripping process creates many of the social problems seen as flowing from a particular culture in Australia. Therefore, it is the absence of culture and authority that contributes to the social issues at play in diaspora communities. Reducing issues of diasporic social integration to a clash in cultures ignores the reality that these communities are stripped of the very culture pundits use to explain their social behaviour in Australia. This reflects a loss of cultural influence in diaspora communities, without there being an apparent substantive problem.

4.2. Dimensions of Afghan Hazara Diaspora: Kinship, Masculinity, and Spirituality

The Afghan Hazara population in Australia has its own set of culture stripping problems. The cultures of diasporic communities share a longstanding feature, which privileges patriarchal structures at home and in society. More instrumentally, belief systems play an important role in the construction and reconstruction of identity in diasporic communities. Transcending the scope of generalisations, this is deterministic yet deeply intersubjective and constructed on several levels of social mediation. The interplay between novel belief systems and kin structures is particularly deterministic in identity construction in the case of the Afghan Hazara diaspora in Australia.

For many Afghan Hazara families in Australia, the culture stripping process of migration erodes pre-existing parental authority, and the dominant position of the father as leader and decider for the family. Parents typically do not speak the local language as well as their children, nor do they learn it as fast. The erosion of authority can lead to a situation where power dynamics within families are flipped. Within this inversion, children become intermediaries between the state and the parents. Historically, the father would play this role but can no longer do so. This is not necessarily problematic. However, it can become a problem if people have a sense of being without any compass. A 2018 study prepared by the United States Institute of Peace (Ahmadi and Stanikzai 2018) found that through decades of war and violent conflicts in Afghanistan, resorting to violence has become an acceptable social norm of masculinity in Afghanistan. Through ethnographic psychodynamic investigation, Chiovenda (2020) found that war, social violence, displacement, and cultural expectations have a profound impact on the psychological and socio-cultural dynamics of masculinity norms in Afghanistan. Chiovenda's research found that across four decades of protracted war, violence became normalised as a necessary feature of masculinity in Afghanistan.

The existence of such starkly contrasting social norms in Afghan culture, clarifies how the culture stripping process of migration deprives the father of his dominant position in the family in Australia. This is not to say that Afghan Hazara men are more likely to commit violence. In fact, the experiences shared by *Abdullah*, *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa* in this study indicate a belief-based disinclination to violence. Nonetheless, the stark contrast between norms of masculinity in Afghan society compared to Australian society forces Afghan families to revise previously accepted and internalised norms of masculinity.

4.3. Religiosity and Collective Shi'i Identity

From the participants surveyed, discrepant levels of religiosity are observable. An abstract, yet distinct, form of collective transnational Shi'i identity, with reverence to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (family of the House), and the plight of Imam Husayn arises as a recurrent theme. As a pathway for advancement, this *motif* of belonging arises in varying degrees of salience across participants over time. Central to Twelver Shi'ism is the holy month of *Muharram*, which laments and mourns the martyrdom of Imam Husayn Ali and his family at the Battle of Karbala in 680AD. *Muharram* climaxes on the 10th day known as *Ashura*. Aghaie (2007) emphasises its centrality in Shi'i ritual, noting "at the core of the symbolism of Ashura is the moral dichotomy between world injustice and corruption on the one hand and God-centred justice, piety, sacrifice and perseverance of the other" (p. 111).

Muharram and *Ashura* are observed around the world in various localities. From Karbala to London and from Quetta to Brisbane, the holy month is observed and expressed in a multiplicity of ways in various local contexts (Bowen 2014). Perhaps due to dislocation, migration, and relocation, the story of Imam Husayn is an important and recurrent spiritual *motif* thematic in the study. Leading global expert of *Ashura*-oriented literature, Muhammad-Reza Fakhr-Rohani, has written comprehensively on the poetics of Shi'ism through the life and plight of Imam Husayn (Fakhr-Rohani 2007, 2014). Describing the centrality of *Ashura*, Aghaie (2007) writes:

> "Ashura will always remain a never-ending lesson. It has since vociferated the voice of the perennial battle between right and wrong. Darkness and light; it continues to mark the oppression of pure religious thought and noble human characteristics. In this way it reverberates the voice of religious nobility as exemplified and crystallised in the Battle of Ashura". (p. 20).

The Karbala massacre and plight of Imam Husayn and his family hold temporal relevance to the history of discrimination and persecution modern Afghan-Hazaras experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The plight and perseverance of Imam Husayn, and the poetic liminality of the Battle of Karbala, become even more relevant when squared with the culture stripping process of migration and relocation many refugees experience.

5. Conceptual Framework: Obstacles and Pathways to Advancements

5.1. Belief Systems and Afghan-Hazara Culture

A belief system is an ideology or set of principles people use to interpret and navigate social worlds. Belief systems can be influenced by factors, such as political affiliation, philosophy, or religion. Typically, belief systems form in two ways. First, through childhood upbringing and environment. Second, through lived-experience (Nescolarde-Selva and Usó-Doménech 2016). Hazara kinship is particularly unique due to the frequency of refugee and migrant experiences, as well as distinct Shi'i religiosity. Observing kinship structures, Hárdi et al. (2004) found that migration, remittances and reproductive social ties are particularly salient in the case of Hazaras. Because of the systemic discrimination Hazaras face in Afghanistan, migration and transnationalism are central elements of modern kinship (Monsutti 2005). The martyrdom of Imam Husayn also features in Hazara kinship, which entail religious practices and life-cycle ceremonies, such as *Muharram* and *Ashura* (Cole and Keddie 1986).

A central theme of this study is the role of belief systems and divergent religious outcomes during times of uncertainty. Focusing on the mobilisation of guilt in Shi'ism as a tool of manipulation and coercion within diaspora communities in Australia; this theme helps explain how new experiences prompt one to revisit earlier beliefs. *Hassan*'s experience in revisiting earlier beliefs resulted in three journeys to the holy Shi'i shrine cities Karbala, Najaf, and Mashhad. The notion that in dire extremity, one seeks God essentialises this psychological approach. People may engage in any form of dramatic religiosity to be accepted. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith 1759), Adam Smith argues, quite explicitly, that there is a universal human preference to be favoured rather than disfavoured by the communal group of which one wishes to be a member. This means one explanation for religiosity is not intense religious belief but a perception on the part of a given individual that those whose respect or support they crave value religious practice. One may not pray or believe in the entirety of the faith, yet still hold religious practices because the problems that would arise from abandoning them would not be worth the trouble. Therefore, it becomes difficult to make assessments of how religious a society might be by quantifying attendance at Friday prayers because it is a norm.

5.2. Belief Systems in New Social Worlds

Ali, *Hassan*, and *Musa*'s socialisation experience is vastly different from that of their parents. The children are products of the globalised world and likely encountered globalising experiences

before arriving in Australia. Parental authority further erodes because younger generations assimilate faster and enter new social worlds. Aspiring to adopt and emulate the values Australia has constructed as identity over the past century, *Ali*, *Hassan*, and *Musa* integrate centuries-rich Hazara culture with Twelver Shi'ism as a belief system in a variety of ways. While Shi'i Islam remains a central feature of Afghan-Hazara culture and spirituality, its forms of identity expression and performance are largely influenced by context-dependant local norms and customs.

Brubaker (2015) divides religious identity into symbolic and material dimensions. The former constitutes issues relating to values, ideals, and culture. The latter refers to economic and political factors, and how these are instrumental as resources for advancement. Accepting the transversal nature of religious identity, Brubaker argues that religion carries a unique "normative ordering power" (Brubaker 2012). The construction and instrumentalisation of religious identities are complex and cut along several dimensions of society. Identity construction begins on an individual level. It is then mediated and negotiated within religious communities, which are also affected by wider social and political norms. Because Shi'ism is the minority faith in Islam and collective identity centres on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Karbala, the belief system is uniquely based on grief, resistance, and victimhood. Upholding Shi'i virtues requires extreme piety in modern Australia. Within diasporic religious communities, lack of piety can be mobilised to cast shame and guilt on those who strive for better things in their lives.

5.3. Grievance, Guilt, and Shame

Shame and guilt are features of Afghan and Pakistan culture (Barfield 2008; Hárdi et al. 2004). The guilt/shame paradigm has also been applied to understand modesty in Islamic culture and society (Botz-Bornstein and Abdullah-Khan 2014). If one experiences the extremities of absolute war or poverty, and the culture-stripping migration process, grievances in diasporic communities are likely to exist. In diasporic communities where grievances are prevalent, shame and guilt can be mobilised as a coercive, and sometimes prejudicial tool in intergroup relations. Grievances can be expressed in malign ways when stratum prejudice, perceived or otherwise, intersects with collective identity. The literature on guilt-based societies suggests that power is maintained through the creation and sustained reinforcing of guilt to make certain behaviours morally unacceptable and ultimately undesirable (Hiebert 1985). Mobilisation of guilt and shame help explain the historical prevalence of pride, and revenge dynamics, such as honour killings. Guilt and shame-based social norms can also arise when victim-based belief systems are added to a context or localisation with existing grievances.

5.4. Hidden Sectarianisation

Sectarianism is a contested term, which often conflates cleavages within the Sunni-Shia rivalry and reduces them to entrenched doctrinal incongruence or "ancient hatreds" (Haddad 2020). The term is also used in the European context in reference to racism and prejudicial attitudes in the United Kingdom (Damer 1989; Davies 2006). While problematic in a binary Islamic context, the term is relevant to Afghan-Hazara socialisation in diasporic communities. This is because the amplification of grievance and intergroup competition takes place at the doctrinal level, the communal sub-state level, and crucially, at the nation-state level through national identity and belonging. Therefore, pathways to advancement are context dependant, implicating state power. James C. Scott analyses the dynamic between state power and tribal ethnic identity. He argues that identity is generated "at the periphery, almost entirely for the purpose of making a political claim to autonomy and/for resource" (Scott 2009, p. 258). Before unpacking the "hidden sectarianism" described in this study, it is necessary to draw some distinctions from other associated intergroup terms in social psychology such as prejudice and discrimination. In 1954, Gordon Allport wrote that "intergroup prejudice consists of negative opinion against an outgroup without sufficient evidence" (Allport 1954, p. 115). Social psychologists typically divide prejudice into "blatant" and "subtle" categorises (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). While the

tangible evidence of subtle prejudice is less salient, Pettigrew (2008) argues "subtle prejudice correlates highly with blatant prejudice and predicts discriminatory intentions and behaviour".

While the scholarship on sectarianism is rich, Haddad (2020) persuasively argues the term "sectarianism" is problematic and that, if any, "sectarian identities" is a more suitable application (*Ibid*). Haddad interrogates the sectarianism literature, making the point that the prejudiced nature of sectarian*ism* requires a more tautological body of literature akin to critical studies on racism (p. 26). However, notions of sectarianisation and sectarian identities offer relevance to the study. In seeking to distil the sectarian issue, Haddad offers two useful observations regarding religious identity of relevance to this study.

First, when measuring the normative ordering power of religion, the importance of localised context cannot be understated. Haddad (2020) argues "religious identity's normative ordering power is only as potent as the religious doctrine from which it is derived are relevant at any given moment" (p. 61). This becomes important during the liminality stages of migration because religious beliefs might confer more social status in Quetta, Pakistan than Brisbane, Australia. The second observation of relevance to this study is Haddad's depiction of the fluidity and context-dependant nature of identity. He writes, "In times of tension or crisis, the gap between ideal intergroup relations and reality widens, as does the gap between what people claim and how they feel. People can over-emphasise the extent to which they are guided by socially-desirable values" (Haddad 2020, p. 67). These observations essentialise the fluid nature of belief systems and the multiplicity of ways they can be used to express Shi'i identity in diasporic communities. *Hassan*'s experiences with religious community as a pathway to advancement indicate elements of hidden sectarianism exist *within* religious diasporic communities in Brisbane. Despite shared Islamic creed, relatable displacement experiences, and diasporic 'othering' in Australia, a form of hidden sectarian*ism* arises within religious communities in diasporic social worlds.

6. Seeking "Qualified Life" through Shi'ism: Escaping Othering and Hidden Sectarianism in Logan

> *"I had lots of questions about the teachings of religion, that I wasn't satisfied with the messages of the religion preached and taught by the scholars over the years. I had many questions, hundreds of questions. But still I asked myself, I need to find out the answers of my questions. I said I must take responsibility to seek the authentic and accurate answers to my questions. And I got most of the answers to most of them on the last day [in Mashhad]."*

> *—Hassan.*

As the eldest son, *Hassan*'s position in the family was elevated in the process of migration to Australia. Hasan took a vanguard position integrating the family into Australia's globalised society, without discarding the deeply spiritual and cultural traditions. For this reason, *Hassan*'s personal experience with pathways to advancement in Australia began through the traditional route of personalised networks within the community, gradually pivoting towards the more globalised pathways, such as education and business. *Hassan*'s story of migration to Australia is primarily one of globalised integration through business entrepreneurialism. Before reaching this position, however, *Hassan* engaged actively with diasporic religious communities as a pathway for personal advancement. As the vanguard of the family's spiritual traditions, *Hassan*'s prejudicial experience with this pathway created several inner conflicts. Seeking answers to the many intersecting issues affecting his diasporic experience, *Hassan* travelled to the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf in 2015. Returning to similar obstacles in Australia preventing a "qualified life" through Shi'ism, *Hassan* travelled to the Iranian shrine city of Mashhad in 2017. Between miracles in Mashhad and "hidden sectarianism" in Logan, this section examines *Hassan*'s navigation of new social worlds and pathways to advancement in Australia.

6.1. Shrine Cities as Utopian Spaces of Qualified Life

Due to the fluid process of migration, reconciling identity with religious belief systems can be difficult for young Afghan Hazaras in Australia. Seeking to uphold the "qualified life" of Shi'i Islam, and leading the family into unfamiliar globalised society, *Hassan* travelled twice, to the most revered and sacred sites in Shi'i Islam, the shrines of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Family of the Prophet). Similar to the notional *polis*, norms and shared values construct the fabric of society to reflect utopian ideals in Shi'i shrine cities. The story of Hassan's journey for a "qualified life" is crucial to understanding his navigation of multiple social worlds. As a pathway of advancement in Australia, *Hassan* engaged with religious diaspora communities in Australia. However, his experience, which is a common critique of the decentred nature of clerical Shi'ism, was that personal gain, rivalry, and prejudicial attitudes within religious communities influenced power structures, alienating new followers seeking unity. *Hassan* identified this issue as communal rather than doctrinal. Therefore, rather than abandon the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Family of the Prophet), he went to its temporal and spatial heartland of Karbala.

Before going to Karbala, *Hassan* had been struggling to understand and grasp the teaching of Shi'ism while living in Australia. He believed "The teachings which I have been told was not making sense as a teaching of religion but rather than a means of control for personal gain. The teaching was also misleading and offered a culturally embedded view of religion". Due to wrong and manipulative messages of Islam conveyed to *Hassan*, he felt "I lost all of the hope and it looked like all the doors are closed for me". Reflecting on this period he recalls: "I lost the trust and faith for the religion after my past experiences of misleading information, which affected my mental health, spirituality and as human purpose. I lost my dignity and my value". However, a Muslim friend incessantly encouraged *Hassan* that his answers could be found through travelling to the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf. "He insisted me multiple times to visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (PBUH) and seek help, he mentioned your life will be changed just like mine changed". While encouraged by the stories of his friend and others, *Hassan* worryingly asked himself, "Since I am no longer believing the religion, how will Allah, Imam Husayn (PBUH) and Ahlebait (PBUT) help me?". Despite these concerns, he was still intent on visiting the shrine of Imam Husayn and the shrines of other Imams in Iraq.

In Twelver Shi'ism, shrine cities are key sites of pilgrimage (*ziyarat*) and theological learning (Litvak 1998). Considered by many as the most spiritual site in Shi'a Islam, Karbala contains the shrines of Imam Husayn and Abbas ibn Ali, two of the sons of Ali, the first Imam in Shi'ism and fourth Caliph. While the month of *Muharram* and observance of *Ashura* are observed in several global locations annually, Karbala is eternally evoked in lamentation of Husayn and his partisans. In 1984, Grand Ayatollah Mohmmad Hussain Fadlallah wrote, "*Discussion about the Karbala event does not mean stopping in geography or its history. Each of our generations has its own Ashura and its own Karbala*". For many Shi'as, *ziyarat* to Karbala is tantamount to making the Hajj. Throughout history, Shi'i historiographies construct Karbala as the centre of Shi'a collective consciousness. Ja'far as-Sadiq was an 8th century Muslim scholar and the 6th Imam in Shi'a Islam. He also founded the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence in modern Twelver and Ismaili Shi'ism. Emphasising the centrality of Karbala, as-Sadiq wrote,

> *If I relate to you the merit of visiting his grave, you shall abandon the Hajj, while a group from among you would not go for the Hajj. Woe be to you! Do you not know that Allah preferred Karbala to be the Sanctuary of His peace and affluence before He chose Makkah to be His Sanctuary?*

Visiting the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, *Hassan* pursued a pathway of personal development through the epistemic community and qualified life of shrine cities in replacement of Logan. Socially discontented and spiritually disillusioned by the prejudicial structure of religious diasporic communities in Australia, he sought spatial providence in the temporal and spiritual capital of Shi'ism. However, several visa issues made the viability of *Hassan*'s journey to Karbala unlikely. The trip organiser told him, "only a miracle could make you get your visa, I cannot see any chance of you receiving your visa on time. He mentioned that if you get your visa, I would consider it a miracle and special invitation to visit the shrine". *Hassan* had an inner conversation:

> I had a moment where I had an internal conversation that If I get my visa on time that means It's a sign from Imam Hussain (PBUH) that you are invited, and I will get help with all my questions, beliefs and doubts regarding the religion. But If I don't get my visa on time, I will get this sign that I am not welcomed, and I will not receive any help and support from Imam Hussain (PBUH).

Miraculously, *Hassan*'s visa arrived a few days before the group intended to travel to Karbala. The organiser told him "you are very lucky, and you are specially invited for travel to Karbala by Imam Husayn (PBUH) because I could not see any chance of you travelling with us". This gave *Hassan* hope that Imam Husayn (PBUH) would help and receive him because, "this answered the internal conversations I had with myself. So, and I travelled with full hope that I will get my answers". During the pilgrimage, *Hassan* worried "would I get help from Imams (PBUT) and would my pilgrimage and prayers be accepted as I had stopped practising the religion from the last 2–3 years. I was not getting feelings of spiritual connection. But on the contrary I still kept believing and having positive and hopeful thoughts". He reflected on the journey in its entirety:

> I was receiving answers of my questions through discussions with a friend who joined me for the pilgrimage. On the last day while I was in Najaf at the Shrine of Imam Ali (PBUH), our discussions reached a climax. This clearly showed me the actual problem that could severely help me to change my life. As it was the last day of our stay in Iraq and end of our pilgrimage. I visited again the shrine of Imam Ali (PBUH) and seek help for the actual problem which was holding me and causing all the doubts about the religion. And I hold that strong faith that I will get help to resolve this problem and will constantly get help in the future with my faith and my purpose."

6.2. Hidden Sectarianism in Logan

I tried to enlighten them but it was a waste of time. All of them think they're Ayatollahs. Within their minds, they're all Ayatollahs.

When *Hassan* returned to the religious communities in Australia, he stopped asking questions or engaging in religious debates or discussions. "I went to the mosque, but I wasn't asking any questions from them because I knew they wouldn't be given the right answers. When I came back, I didn't do any debates with any of them. It's useless they're not going to change their mind. I'm not going to waste my time". He deduced that within diasporic communities in Australia, Hazaras were "treated like 3rd class citizens. This was mostly between the Pakistani and Afghani people". Still deeply religious, *Hassan* received answers "every day from prayers". Returning from the shrines in Iraq back to Australia, he says "I pray more now for hours and get more answers. I get messages from different avenues".

Thinking about hidden sectarianism in the context of this study, one psychological concept that might explain prejudices within diasporic communities is Sigmund Freud's theory of "narcissism of minor differences" (Blok 1998). Freud's theory holds that people, on both the individual and collective level, form an exaggerated sense of uniqueness to differentiate themselves from others. To offer a cursory example with no intent of generalisation, Indian Muslims who might find unity with Afghan-Hazara Muslims in Karbala are more likely to exaggerate their ethnic differences in Australia if it is politically expedient to do so. This example says more about the context-dependent pathways to advancement and access to the nation state than it does about perceptions held by Indian Muslims towards Afghan-Hazaras. Typifying Freud's psychoanalytic theory of narcissism of minor differences, Khoja Shi'a experienced centuries of discrimination in India similar to the discrimination Shi'a Hazaras faced and continue to face in Afghanistan.

6.3. Miracles in Mashhhad

Several years later, *Hasan* was drawn to the spatial and temporal focal point Shi'i shrine cities represent. After seeing visuals of himself present in the holy shrine of Imam Reza during prayers, *Hassan* travelled to the Shi'i shrine city of Mashhad in 2017. While Qom hosts Iran's dominant educational *hawza* (seminary), Mashhad is considered by many to be Iran's most transcendental shrine city. Mashhad houses the shrine of Imam Reza, the 8th Imam in Twelver Shi'ism. Gaining its name from the creation of the Imam Reza shrine, Mashhad means "place of martyrdom". The historically spiritual city is constructed as a key site of cultural diplomacy for Iran to promote transnational Shi'ism. For many Shi'a, however, Mashhad is viewed more as a place of spiritual transcendence than a space of state-supported symbolic capital. Dissatisfied with the teachings of Islam, and the messages and preaching of scholars over the years, *Hassan* had many questions:

Because I was not able to trust any scholar at that point. I asked myself, I must take responsibility to seek the authentic and accurate answers to my questions. Based on the teachings of the religion that Allah always help its believers through Ahlebait (PBUT) and that the believers should seek help from Allah through Ahlebait (PBUT).

With these objectives in mind, *Hassan* travelled to Mashhad to gain answers and clarity to his many questions regarding faith and belief. At the shrine of Imam Raza, he met a scholar in Mashhad named "Syed Ali Reza". After lengthy discussions, *Hassan* realised the scholar "was also struggling with his life, personal development, spirituality, personal growth, beliefs and purpose. He was constantly seeking answers and ways which align with the religious beliefs". The scholar told him of a psychologist and religious scholar who "helped him to change all facets of his life in which he was struggling". After *Hassan* shared his experiences of prejudice within religious communities limiting pathways to advancement, "He said I can share with you what I have been told. He said my situation is like yours. Islam does not want you to put yourself down. It is not harsh, if you commit sin God will forgive you". "Whereas, seeking improvement and betterment in every aspects of life were considered sins, those were the messages I have received before from the scholars, which was completely opposite to what this scholar (Syed Ali Raza) taught me [in Mashhad]."

6.4. Shi'ism as Entrepreneurial

Because of the guilt and shame-based social factors discussed in relation to the context of collective identities in diasporic communities, certain features of victimhood, grief, and piety can be mobilised in practical ways divergent from doctrine. At the same time, this interpretivist paradigm squares well with entrepreneurialism through the empowering Shi'i virtues of courage and perseverance. Discussing personal advancement through Shi'ism *Hassan* was exposed to a "completely different view of the religion, in which there is hope, opportunity, support, encouragement, growth, personal development, having a successful life and a life full of abundance". Describing a spiritual transcendence of sorts, he described this new philosophy of entrepreneurial Shi'ism as "All those things, which I was imagining and expecting from the religion to be while I was young".

Previously, I have been told only about sin, committing sin will have this consequence, do not do this, do not do that etc. but there was no substitute for the "don't do sin or don't do that). Everything we as a human being would require having a better life and become successful person was portrayed as a sin and void way of livelihood under the teachings of religion.

Guilt and shame are two dominant themes experienced by *Hasan* within religious diasporic communities. Aspiring to earn money was not considered virtuous. *Hassan* said, "I have been told by scholars earning money and doing business is not good and you cannot gain spirituality, the religion wants to pray all the time". Furthermore, *Hassan* previously was told to seek closure from religion and that "earning money/doing business will get you away from Allah and Ahlebait (PBUT). These were and many more restricting beliefs of how religion wants us to live our life was taught to me, which could not make any sense to me". The scholar in Mashhad offered a different opinion, telling *Hassan*: "belief and intellect is the true message of the religion". The scholar encouraged him to continue

working on his personal development while seeking help and guidance from Allah. Referring to this encounter, the scholar told him: "this conversation could be the help you have received from Imam Raza (PBHU) during this visit to the shrine". *Hassan* agreed, noting "I believe that it was a help I received from Imam Raza (PBUH) when I visited the Shrine. And I am still receiving help constantly on daily basis from Allah, Ahlebait (PBUT) and Imam Raza (PBUH)". *Hassan* reflects his journey to Mashhad with nostalgia,

> I am greatly thankful and grateful to Allah, Ahlebait (PBUT) and Imam Raza (PBUH) for the help, support and opportunities to help me become a better and successful person/entrepreneur and achieve my life's purpose so I am able to bring positive change in the lives of all the oppressed, orphans, and all human beings.

In dire extremity one seeks God. Despite the centrality of his Shi'i faith, *Hassan* did not find fulfilment through the traditional pathway of advancement of religious community in Australia: "I've been treated very badly before in the religious community and it affected me mentally a lot. Because of the wrong message they had given me". *Hassan* viewed his disheartening experience with the Shi'i community in Logan as more of a social factor than intrinsic to the teachings of Shi'ism. Because of the centrality of Shi'ism to *Hassan*'s identity and his vanguard role in the family's integration into Australian society, *Hassan* sought answers through the *ziyarat* to the holy shrine cities of Shi'i Islam. Through Shi'ism and *ziyarat*, *Hasan* was drawn to entrepreneurialism and business as pathways for advancement in Australia.

> I asked the scholar [in Mashhad] about business and personal development. Does Islam stop us from doing business and earning money, he said no. As long as it is align with religious teachings, it is lawful and whatever is acceptable in your society. Do everything with permission and be ethical. Even in numerous quotes of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) a businessman and trader has been called "Habibullah". If one can do business and trade, should do. And the Prophets and all the Imams (PBUT) I can see they were entrepreneurs they were businessperson.

7. Becoming *Australian* through Sports and Business

> *I still love the Imams. But human beings are just a product of infinite consciousness and who we are being. Our names, our genders, our cultures – they're all labels.*
>
> —*Ali.*

As the middle child, *Ali* occupies a similarly distinct role to *Musa* and *Hassan*. *Ali*'s engagement with Shi'ism as a belief system began in Quetta and continued during his early years in Australia. However, due to reasons not dissimilar from *Hassan*, *Ali* slowly lost faith because of the inherent contradictions in the religious communities in Australia. *Ali* found a unique pathway to advancement through his engagement with sporting communities in Australia, culminating in representing Australia at the highest junior level. Scholars such as Saad (2011) have highlighted the interrelationship between sport, culture, and the construction of national identity. Representing Australia in Europe was stressful because of the difficult logistics involved in attaining a European visa as an Afghan-Hazara with permanent residence in Australia. Stressed from the visa situation and dissatisfied with the support from the relevant Australian sporting body. *Ali* was relieved to reach Europe and be able to compete in the competition. As discussed, the "red light" district incident was particularly disturbing because *Ali* was still very faithful in 2017. Before departing for the competition location, team members told him "let's go for a walk around the shops". He recounts how things soon appeared odd as he ventured down certain streets,

> So we left the hotel. There was this one street name it gave me a bizarre feeling. When I got there, I realised, this is purely haram. I was apologising to Allah and Imam Husayn. My

team members were encouraging me to look around, telling me it was interesting. It was a shock to my system and I did pray that night. I was already emotionally drained from the visa issues, and needed to focus on the competition".

After the competition, instead of drinking with foreigners, *Ali* chose to read the *Ziyarat Ashura* – a prayer that forms part of the liturgy used during the pilgrimages to the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala. Upon returning to Australia, *Ali* did not attend Friday prayers at the Mosque in Australia. He still observed the holy month of *Muharram*. Because of the globalised content at his disposal, *Ali* was able to remain spiritual by listening to *Nohas* and also various *Majlis* convened by imams (scholars) he liked. Some of the influential imams (scholars) included Allama Talib Johri, Allama Nasir Abbas, Allama Irfan Haider Abidi, and Allama Syed Mohsin Naqvi. Globalised Afghan-Hazara's are uniquely positioned to derive spiritual purpose from digital religious platforms. One particular event that solidified *Ali*'s decision to abandon the local religious community as a means of advancement came when a community leader in Brisbane approached him and told him they would get a sponsorship for him from a local MP. The community leader told *Ali*: "send me your bibliography and we'll talk to the local MP and get you a sponsorship. However, some weeks later *Hassan* came home quite distressed telling *Ali*, "they're planning to use the money for themselves". Describing the magnitude of the event, *Ali* recalled, "that made me lose faith in the institution, they were a bunch of hypocrites". *Ali* messaged his contact in the community to let him know he was no longer interested in receiving the sponsorship.

Despite the disappointing news, *Ali* remained highly spiritual and observed the holy month of Muharram at home. *Ali* rationalised this decision by noting that "during Muharram at the mosques, I never felt a sense of peace. It wasn't helping my spirit. I was wondering why it was happening. I was there with good intentions – for *AhluBayt* and for Imam Husayn". Because of his poor experiences with the leadership of the religious community and the feeling of detachment from Muharram observance, he said "because of these things, I had lost confidence in the mosque and the community". Collectively, these factors contributed to *Ali*'s decision to pursue pathways to advancement in Australia through sport and business. By this point, Ali's sporting abilities for his age in Australia and throughout Queensland were unrivalled. He subsequently sought Australian identity and advancement in Australia through this pathway. He said "sport helped me a lot with my identity. It gave me a new sense of identity and also confidence as to who I am and who I am becoming. Sport was something that I liked to do. I liked the interactions, I enjoyed the interactions". Representing Australia and integrating into new social circles through sport, *Ali* found purpose and advancement outside of the diasporic religious community, and into local sporting communities.

7.1. Identity and Sport as a Pathway for Advancement

Describing the importance of sport during this point of liminality, *Ali* recalled: "it helped me get out of the bad communities. I was feeling like I am a part of the country, I am a part of the people. We want people to accept us, and sports was doing that for me". Like his brothers, both *Ali*'s identity and purpose were in flux. He said, "Sport in this sense, helped me find family". For most of his junior years, *Ali* was somewhat infamously known for his ambition—to become the best sportsman in the world. Because of the prevalence of "tall poppy syndrome" in Australian culture, *Ali*'s honest ambitions were sometimes poked at and ridiculed by others in the sporting community. This was not a considerable problem, and after some time assimilating into Australian culture, he began to share his goals and ambitions less with his teammates. At the same time, local sporting communities grew to understand the roots of *Ali*'s convictions and ambitions. *Ali* continues to compete at the highest Australian level but also took on full time work in finance—precipitating a new passion enabled by the liberal capitalist nature of Australian society.

After spending some years honing his finance skills, *Ali* began a career the finance industry and immersed himself in new bodies of literature. In his words, "When I started working in finance, I saw a new world. I found a new passion. I was bad at school but I love finance, capitalism and entrepreneurship". This newfound passion began around 2018. However, working in Australian finance

did not align well with the Islamic laws regarding finance, interest, and taxation. In entrepreneurial vein, he declared, "If Islam is stopping me from working at a bank, then *I'm done with it*. That's when I stopped praying, stopped doing Ramadan". He explained the inner balance struck by stating,

> "I still love the Imams. But human beings are just a product of infinite consciousness and who we are being. Our names, our genders, our cultures – they're all labels. What is religion even saying? What's my purpose in this world? Islam actually does not tell you these things clearly. Everyone has a purpose that's why I'm here. I did not get that from Islam. I got it from other avenues. Human beings are a product and we are using that to experience consciousness".

7.2. Australian Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurship as a Pathway for Advancement

Ali, *Musa*, and *Hassan* certainly all share many sentiments regarding entrepreneurship. While *Hassan* seeks to integrate his Shi'i beliefs to complement his entrepreneurial mindset, *Musa* and *Ali* see less of a need to wed to the two for successful pathways to advancement in Australia. As the most globalised of the siblings, *Musa* is still in his tertiary education years, which *Hassan* and *Ali* were unable pursue after their year 12 studies. Australia has prospered greatly through neoliberalism. Harvey (2007) describes neoliberalism as a principle and pathway to advancement, which "values market exchange as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human activities and substitutes all previously held ethical beliefs" (p. 3). Bourdieu (1998) describes neoliberalism as "a programme for destroying collective structure which impede pure market logic". The existence of identity through neoliberalism squared with Shi'i Islam is a significant finding drawn from this study. *Ali*'s path to entrepreneurship involved several business-oriented jobs after year 12 before entering finance. He recalls,

> "I didn't know that the finance industry existed. I never had that mind-set of being an entrepreneur. I thought Islam is just telling us to be workers. Once I got into finance I started reading more. I became curious, how does this money work? So I started studying rich people, how they make money—I want to be a capitalist".

Ali reflects that from a young age, he had entrepreneurial ideals, but they were discouraged because of Islam's emphasis on "staying poor". He believes that moving to Australia shifted his mindset dramatically. "Things changed so much between Pakistan and Australia, I feel like we always had it. Education is a big part of it. However, I found the correct education is financial literacy, learning to invest – to multiply it. And you can help people with that, that's my goal – to help orphans and the disabled. Money allows me to do that. It obviously doesn't buy you happiness but it does give you choices".

8. Advancement through Individuation: Radical Revision of Previously Held Beliefs

> *My life in Quetta and the transition to Australia was defined by my experiences as a Shia.*
>
> *Islamic scholars liked to sell this idea of depending on Allah under the elaborate fallacy of, "Allah will help you, as long as you have tried your best and exhausted all the means that would help you reach your goal." I did not fully grasp this horrendous logic while in Quetta but living in Australia for a short while cleared my mind.*
>
> —*Musa*.

This section details the contradictions *Musa* found in Shi'i Islam as a belief system in both Pakistan and Australia, and the alternate pathways to advancement he consequently sought. Contrasting *Hassan*'s unsolicited new "vanguard" role for the family in Australia, *Musa*'s position in the family as the youngest made him most malleable to globalisation, and to non-traditional pathways to advancement in Australia. Because *Musa*'s religious scepticism developed in Quetta from a young age, he reflects "my understanding of Islam seems like a blur". Like *Hassan*, *Musa* attributes his disillusionment

with Shi'ism largely to the thematic contradictions evident between communal practice and doctrinal theory. As a pathway to advancement in Australia, *Musa* expresses an optimistic philosophy of identity through individuation.

8.1. False Prophets and "Horrendous Logic"

> They left no room for individuality and it felt like I was a soldier bound to strict training regimes.

Musa's candid views on the inherent contradictions in Shi'i Islam began in Pakistan and further solidified once relocating to Australia. His engagement with belief systems offers a unique account of previously held beliefs and new philosophic potential pathways for advancement. Reflecting on the appropriation of Shi'ism as a communal tool in Pakistan, *Musa* recounts, "The community had a shared system of belief in Islam, with Shia majority in the area we resided in. Religious gatherings (Majlis, Jashan, Nazar/Niaz etc.) were commonplace to unify people, create a social environment, sense of unity and strengthen connection with Allah/ Ahl al-Bayt". However, in retrospect, *Musa* saw "no distinction between cultural practices and the teachings of Islam. Ideologies that were not part of Islam were upheld and spread by "scholars" and the average citizen". Reflecting on these false prophets in Quetta, *Musa* concluded "Unsurprisingly, this left no shortage of hypocrites who presented themselves as devout, kind and genuine Shia".

Unlike *Hassan*, *Musa* viewed the practical mutation of Shi'ism as partly due to its ambiguous doctrine and its malleability to incorrect interpretation. In Quetta, he identified several ideological misrepresentations negatively affecting the Hazara community. These included "outlook on life, their standards, ambitions, education and their faith in their own abilities". *Musa* also remarked that "Islam was accountable in part because of its flawed philosophy towards modern society". In his view,

> Islamic scholars liked to sell this idea of depending on Allah under the elaborate fallacy of, "Allah will help you, as long as you have tried your best and exhausted all the means that would help you reach your goal." I did not fully grasp this horrendous logic while in Quetta but living in Australia for a short while cleared my mind. Once I developed the courage to develop my beliefs, I started to think: if I put all the effort and achieved everything myself, what role did Allah play in it? How do I know He helped? To what extent did He help?

Though not initially pursued in depth, philosophic questions concerning the nature and the existence of God were central to *Musa*'s identity and purpose in Australia. He concluded that "the concept of religion and specifically Islam was foolish as any other person's answer to the origin of life". In his experience, "Islam inhibited me and many others from thinking critically or finding answers contradictory to our religious beliefs." A noteworthy finding relevant to the themes examined in this study was the existence and prevalence of black magic (*kala jaddu*) and possession (*jinn*) in Pakistan (Rytter 2010; Hardie and Khalifa 2005). *Musa* viewed such localised Islamic superstitious norms as making "the Shia more prone to believing in superstitions/miracles, whether they were part of Islam's preaching or the Quetta culture".

An issue *Musa* identified in his experiences in both Quetta and Logan was doctrinal (mis)interpretation by Ayatollahs and Islamic scholars. Squaring this thematic issue of interpretations of the infallibles, and flawless texts, such as the Qur'an, *Musa* explains,

> It does not seem right having select humans explaining to a larger set of humans what the word of God (or in this case, Allah) is. These Ayatollahs are making interpretations, and interpretations can be flawed. Plus, if Quran requires high-level study to understand/derive its message, then to me this suggests that (1) it was not written to be understood by an average person (which is counterproductive) and (2) it is not the word of Allah and its ideologies are not timeless.

> By living in Australia for a mere three years, I developed my philosophy to this extent because I was given the freedom to explore, critique and question ideas. In the big picture,

this reflection and account of events serves to demonstrate the way in which Islam could have influenced the wisdom and intellect of an average person like me. It also serves to show that whether my views are right or wrong is not important. What is important is the action of critical thinking, having the courage to contest ideas, explore other answers and present one's beliefs for critique/correction. These attributes are not characteristic of Islam as it clings to its foundations as absolute truth . . . which is a philosophy that a well-developed religious system should absolutely avoid in the absence of empirical evidence.

8.2. Leaving Nothing to Allah

As discussed, Shi'ism is entrepreneurial in nature. While *Hassan* sought to integrate Shi'ism to complement his entrepreneurial ambitions, *Musa* saw this philosophy as flawed insofar as it was only entrepreneurial to those in positions of religious and social power. He describes the entrepreneurial features of Shi'ism largely as a tool for normalising conformity and rationalising hierarchical subordination. Recalling some doctrinal examples, "There was/is an emphasis on humility and forgiveness, considering haram the acquisition of wealth via simple/compound interest and listening to music, as well as the prevalence of the mindset "leave everything to Allah". Reflecting on the guilt and shame-based cultures of the past, *Musa* recalls "I was unaware of my beliefs at the time because I was young, I showed signs of doubt in these approaches.

> The emphasis on humility prevented people from wanting better things (clothes, cars, money, luxuries) and instilled a mindset that having good things, wanting them, and feeling confident because of them posed you as materialistic/greedy. This had a subconscious effect on the way I responded to my own ambitions, achievements, and mistakes; mostly in a way that made me feel inadequate and below Allah. The problem I saw with feeling below Allah, whether it be in admiration or to seek repentance is that it made you feel powerless and trivial when you experienced hardships or when other people mistreated you.

> It compromised your ability to defend yourself and made you more likely to forgive unconditionally. These attributes translated into your character and with a complete lack of awareness as to why. This was often the case with the women because they tended to be more agreeable, so feelings of triviality were not advantageous in a third-world city like Quetta.

Upon moving to Australia and experiencing the capitalist nature of society, *Musa* identified further problems with the issue of "simple/compound interest" being haram. After studying science and mathematics at university in Australia, *Musa*'s views of Shi'ism as a tool of subjugation further solidified.

> I did not have a proper understanding of this [interest in Islamic finance] until we moved to Australia, but I do recall mentions of it being haram while living in Quetta. Anyway, interest is a major part of our current economic system, so I found it very foolish to limit people to only noble means of acquiring wealth. This is probably one of the reasons why many Muslims including Shias were poor in Quetta; there was not enough emphasis on other forms of education such as finance, science etc. In fact, there was not enough emphasis on proper quality Islamic education.

8.3. Dogmatic Doctrine: Shi'ism as an Obstacle to Individuality and Personal Advancement

Beyond the economically dogmatic features of Shi'i Islam preventing pathways to advancement, *Musa* identified a broader trend of doctrinal dogma limiting human behaviour. This feature deals largely with the normative social tensions between Shi'i Islam within the context of Afghan-Hazara culture, and its contrasts with the Australian society *Musa* largely grew up in.

> Forbidding music was another rule that made no sense to me. It was mainly because I did not like the idea of constrained individuality and freedom to explore other "non-Islamic"

areas of life. It closed the Shia's minds to only religious activities and created unquestioning, brainless individuals following a strict Islamic system. The common explanation I was given is, "Music about drugs, alcohol, sex, romance etc. causes you to daydream and disconnects you from reality." And it makes sense why not many Shia in Quetta cared about this rule; it is/was a very over-simplistic perception of human behaviour.

As I was growing up in Australia, I began understanding my childhood doubts about the approach of "leave everything to Allah". I realised that without clarification, this mindset relieved all levels of responsibility from the individual and discouraged the use of one's own natural abilities. I felt this approach was common because of a lack of education amongst the wider Muslim community in Quetta. But more importantly, to me, this belief in Islam dulled people's minds and took advantage of their tendency to choose the easiest path, i.e. depend on a higher being and let it take care of you. Perhaps this had the most profound effect on the collapse of my belief in Islam (and any religion for that matter). I began seeing religious people (mainly Muslims) as lazy, that they did not have the capacity to think for themselves and have the courage to explore other answers.

8.4. Polysemic Poetics: Nobility or Victimhood

Many of *Musa*'s experiences with communal issues as a pathway to advancement in Australia are similar to those expressed by *Hasan* and *Ali*. Throughout this study, however, the powerful poetic narrative of Imam Husayn's martyrdom arises as a *motif* of somewhat obvious relevance to the plight of Afghan-Hazaras, particularly during the process of migration. Because of the uniquely fluid and context-dependant factors affecting 'identity', one might hold onto the story of Karbala beyond Shi'ism. Similar to the crucifixion of Christ, the story serves as a substitute for some other kind of emotion that is at play. This might be memory of childhood in Quetta or workplace encounters in Australia. The historical event serves as something to evoke and legitimate grief where one might be expected to show a stiff upper lip. It is important to note that much of *Musa*'s upbringing was in Australia. Therefore, the aforementioned guilt and shame-based societal factors prevalent in certain cultures and diasporic communities are of epiphenomenal relevance to *Musa*'s identity. Describing the Karbala narrative in his eyes, *Musa* says:

> Imam Husayn is probably the main figure that comes to mind when Islam is mentioned. His martyrdom was a lesson for courage, patience and mercy. While I saw such a sacrifice as sincere and dedicated to peace, I felt some of these historical scenes were over-embellished to present an image of nobility rather than victimhood. I could see how Muslims or non-Muslims studying the event of Karbala could subconsciously confuse the message of courage with silence in the face of oppression. In Islam, I am certain there is heavy emphasis on standing up against evil and oppression; it has good moral standards when it comes to injustice, which is why I would choose it as my religion, should I come to conclude that God does indeed exist. However, there are elements of victimhood in the story of Karbala which I thought does not fit well with the message of peace and courage being taught in a typical Majlis.

The context-dependant contrast in locality is crucial to understanding the evolution of *Musa*'s perception and individual connection to Imam Husayn and the Karbala tragedy. He recounts,

> In my time as a Shia, I felt most of the religious gatherings were about grief, sadness and morbid events. As a Shia in Quetta, I started questioning whether it is okay to carry on smiling/ being happy after spending the past hour mourning and crying over the demise of an important Islamic figure. It just seemed insane that we could be crying in one moment and smiling/laughing/cracking jokes in the next. But more importantly, I felt there were psychological consequences stemming from the plethora of negative emotion experienced in this kind of practice.

My life in Quetta and the transition to Australia was defined by my experiences as a Shia. For example, the overemphasis on humility taught me empathy and respect, praying regularly taught me discipline and I also learned the importance of being kind to other people. What you will also notice is that I have not placed as much emphasis on the actions of the Shia Muslims and the way they treated me and each other. This is because I think a religion should not be judged by the actions of its followers, but rather the ideas it represents in its scripture. At the end of the day, humans are flawed creatures and they will make mistakes. Having said that, there is a high degree of human influence in Islam because of the existence of Ayatollahs.

8.5. Squaring Guilt and Grievance with Opportunity and Advancement

Despite *Musa*'s critical take on the practical implementation of Shi'ism, he offers several important observations concerning hidden sectarianism in Quetta compared to Brisbane.

Hazaras were a minority in Logan. I did not feel a part of the community because I guess I was already moving away from Islam. This sense of disconnect in Logan and even after moving was also related to the hypocrisy of the people and them pretending to be good/genuine people. In fact, my aversion to religious people even outside the Shia community was generally due to this and their virtue signalling habits. There was not much of a division in terms of the rich and poor; all types of people came to pray. I never really noticed any Sunni at the mosque and other places of gathering because I saw everyone as equal. But maybe they did attend, and I was not aware. I am inclined to think the Shia in Logan were more open-minded than those in Quetta, so it is a likely possibility.

When asked about the importance of a "moral centre" and squaring his Islamic background with Australian society, *Musa* offers a unique perspective on the nature of materialism in Quetta compared to Australia: "I would rather say people in Quetta were focused on material sources of pleasure due to an overwhelming rate of unemployment and lack of education". In his words, "all that was left to do for the Shia community in Quetta was engaging in materialistic pleasures. I felt that Australia actually had a stronger moral centre on a governmental level, but of course, I would say there was still an uncontrolled indulgence in material sources of pleasure".

Finally, on the topic of opportunity and pathways to advancement in Australia, *Musa* holds broadly optimistic views for his future in Australia. *Musa* describes Australia as "more accepting of homosexuality, sex workers, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and people of different backgrounds. While there was a level of racism and discrimination, that was of course a minority of instances". On the issues of racism and education in Australia, he believes "an issue like racism will never be eradicated (as is the case for many other social issues), so I moved past it. The Australian education system was also much better, and I never felt forced to mould into a specific "Australian identity". *Musa* identifies several opportunities and future pathways to advancement in Australia, such as sports, university, and many other fields. Entrepreneurial and optimistic of his future in Australia's globalised society, he concludes: "There are some language barriers at times, but that is because English is not my native language and I am still learning about Australian lifestyle and culture. It is nothing that proper education could not solve, though".

9. Conclusions

The primary implication of this study is one of individuation through lived-experience and the fluidity of identity. Everyone is an individual and while we speak of the impact and culture, lived-experience is very different. People always have choices they can make about what lessons they might derive from experiences. In this study, three male members of a single family not separated greatly by age hold radically different experiences with religious and social integration in Australia. This spans from *Hassan*'s intense sense of religiosity although not grounded in the local community,

through to *Ali*'s reconciliation of entrepreneurialism and religion, in an inclusive sense that involves making money to help the vulnerable. Having spent most of his life in Australia, *Musa* holds a largely sceptical approach to religiosity. Distinctive in *Ali*'s case was being networked into international sports and sporting social networks. This took him out of Afghan and Shi'ite social worlds into a different world where socialisations and encounters were much different. As a student at an Australian university, *Musa* is taken out of the Afghan and Shi'ite world, into a different kind cosmopolitan educational world. Culture may have the appearance of immutability. However, like any social formation, it is produced, reproduced, and contested through time.

As individuals, everyone has a capacity for individual agency. The study highlights very distinct pathways that *Hasan*, *Musa*, and *Ali* have taken, not just occupationally but ideationally as well. Each engaged in a multiplicity of social worlds, and they share different world views. This militates against any type of homogenising view of Hazaras in Australia. These do not reflect generational scale differences. Rather, different socialisation experiences in Australia demonstrate that people adjust to the social worlds they enter and are not fixed in their ways. For all that they are same family and same generation, they have been living in different social worlds. This works against fixed senses of identity. While faith is thematic in this study, individuation is not tied to culture or faith. Rather, it is a process of psychological differentiation through lived-experience. Ultimately, identifications are complex, and people have agency in choice and through this, the capacity to make individual lessons.

References

Aghaie, J. Kamran. 2007. *Voices of Islam*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Ahmadi, Belquis, and Rafiullah Stanikzai. 2018. *Redefining Masculinity in Afghanistan*. Peace Brief #243. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.

Allport, W. Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Barfield, J. Thomas. 2008. Culture and Custom in nation-building: Law in Afghanistan. *Maine Law Review* 60: 348–73.

Barfield, J. Thomas. 2012. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Blok, Anton. 1998. The Narcissism of Minor Differences. *European Journal of Social Theory* 1: 33–56. [CrossRef]

Botz-Bornstein, Thorsten, and Noreen Abdullah-Khan. 2014. *The Veil in Kuwait: Gender, Fashion, Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. Utopia of Endless Exploitation: The Essence of Neoliberalism. *Le Monde Diplomatique*. (December).

Bowen, Innes. 2014. *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam*. London: Hurst & Co.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches. *Nations and Nationalism* 18: 2–20. [CrossRef]

Brubaker, Rogers. 2015. Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence. *Sociological Theory Nationalism* 33: 1–19. [CrossRef]

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. The Extended Case Method. *Sociological Theory* 16: 4–33. [CrossRef]

Chiovenda, Andea. 2020. *Crafting Masculine Selves: Culture, War and Psychodynamics in Afghanistan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cole, Juan, and Nikki Keddie. 1986. *Shi'ism and Social Protest*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Collins, Jock, Branka Krivokapic-Skoko, and Katherine Watson. 2017. *From Boats to Businesses: The Remarkable Journey of Hazara Refugee Entrepreneurs in Adelaide: Full Report*. Sydney: Centre for Business and School Innovation, UTS Business School Sydney.

Damer, Sean. 1989. *Glasgow: Going for a Song*. London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

Davies, Andrew. 2006. Football and sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s. *Irish Historical Studies* 38: 200–19. [CrossRef]

Fakhr-Rohani, Muhammad-Reza. 2007. *Ashura Poems in English*. Karbala: Imam al-Husain's Sacred Sanctuary.

Fakhr-Rohani, Muhammad-Reza. 2014. *From Medina to Karbala: In the Words of Imam al Husayn*. Birmingham: Sun Behind the Cloud Publications.

Gluckman, Max. 1961. Ethnographic Data in British Social Anthropology. *Sociological Review* 9: 5–7. [CrossRef]

Haddad, Farnar. 2020. *Understanding Sectarianism: Sunni Shia Relations in the Modern Arab World*. London: Hurst & Co.

Hárdi, Lilla, László Lajtai, and Oravecz Robert. 2004. Social transition, exclusion, shame and humiliation. *Torture* 14: 4–15.

Hardie, Tim, and Najat Khalifa. 2005. Possession and Jinn. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98: 351–253.

Harvey, David. 2007. Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610: 21–44. [CrossRef]

Hetz, Hiedi, and David Radford. 2020. Aussies? Afghans? Hazara refugees and migrants negotiated multiple identities and belonging in Australia. *Social Identities*, 1–17. [CrossRef]

Hiebert, G. Paul. 1985. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Humphrey, Michael. 1992. Sectarianism and the Politics of Identity: The Lebanese in Sydney. In *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*. Edited by Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi. London: Centre for Lebanese Studies.

Humphrey, Michael. 2001. Lebanese Since the 1970'. In *The Australian People*, 2nd ed. Edited by James Jupp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 564–65.

Ibrahimi, Niamatullah. 2017. *The Hazaras and the Afghan State: Rebellion, Exclusion and the Struggle for Recognition*. London: Hurst & Co Publishers.

Litvak, Meir. 1998. *Shi'i Scholars the Nineteenth-Century Iraq: The 'Ulama' of Najaf and Karbala'*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Maley, William. 2002. *The Afghanistan Wars*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Maley, William. 2008. The Case of the Afghan Refugee Population: Finding Durable Solutions in Contested Transitions. In *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*. Edited by Howards Adelman. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Maley, William. 2016. *What is a Refugee*. London: Hurst & Co.

Monsutti, Alessandro. 2004. Cooperation, Remittances, and Kingship among the Hazaras. *International Society of Iranian Studies* 37: 219–40. [CrossRef]

Monsutti, Alessandro. 2005. *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras in Afghanistan*. London: Routledge.

Mousavi, Sayed Askar. 1998. *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*. Surrey: Curzon.

Nescolarde-Selva, J., and Usó-Doménech. 2016. What are Belief Systems? *Foundations of Science* 21: 147–252.

Pettigrew, Thomas. 2008. Intergroup prejudice: Its causes and cures. *Actualidades en Pisclogia* 22: 115–24. [CrossRef]

Pettigrew, Thomas, and Roel Meertens. 1995. Subtle and blatant prejudice in Western Europe. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 25: 57–75. [CrossRef]

Rashid, Ahm. 2002. *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Rubin, Barnett. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rytter, Mikkel. 2010. In-laws and outlaws: Black magic among Pakistani migrants in Denmark. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16: 46–63. [CrossRef]

Saad, Nathan. 2011. The Sydney Cricket Ground: Sport and the Australian Identity. *UTS ePress* 3: 1–8.

Scott, C. James. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Smith, Adam. 1759. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Edited and translated by D.D. Raphael and A.L Macfie. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Liberty Classics.

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.