

## TAPE LETTERS – SCOTLAND EPISODE 4: FAST-FORWARD

00:00 INTRO

MUSIC + BRIEF CASSETTE CLIPS

TAPE LETTERS - SCOTLAND.  
EPISODE 4: FAST-FORWARD

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS\_TLPS-MI-1-2\_s2\_f01

[00:18:42] Kausar Ilyas: **A1** I remember in 1960s, we had a TV in our house. ... And a radio as well. ... Tape recorder was just a norm, just like having a frying pan in your house, you know?

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS\_TLPS-MI-1-2\_s2\_f01

[00:38:39] Kausar Ilyas: **A2** It was quick and instant. And you could stop and start. Whereas with letters, you have to read the whole letter to get the message. Tape and the recorder was instant... and the tape was there for you.

01:14 CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

TABASSUM:

**“The tape was there for you.”**

**Actually, cassettes hadn’t been around for long - they only started to become widely available in the 1960s. By the early 70s the tape recorder was, indeed, as prolific as the frying pan!**

**But of course, technology keeps advancing...**

[00:45:15] Asghar Mohammed-A: Then, from the tapes, uh, other things came, you know, like telephones came. And they stopped the tapes. (No, blue airmail letters....) Oh, blue airmail letters, they came. And after that, the phones came. So, anybody had a phone near the house, they went over to tell, this is your message, you know, come and listen to the phone.

[00:28:57] Mohammad Khan [PK]-A: - **“FROM URDU”** - They installed the telephone in Pakistan, but you had to call the operator first, share your number, and make an appointment to ask them to dial the call early in the morning the next day. We thought of calling Pakistan early in the morning because everyone used to be at home then. We asked the operator to book the call for 9 AM. The operator would call us at sharp nine, and ask us to talk to the other side. The telephone was costly then, but the people were fond

of calling each other. The tapes were different, but when we started using the telephones, we felt so happy to listen to and reply to our Mum's, Dad's, and brother's voices and reply to them. We felt so happy to talk to our siblings. We would talk for an hour or two, and the operator would say, "Brother, you have talked for so long; you must stop the call now." And we would ask him to drop the call then.

### **CASSETTE AUDIO (gives telephone number)**

NLS\_TLPS-KK-25-T1\_s2\_f01\_v1

[00:21:48] Nadira Saddiq [PK]-A: - **"FROM URDU"** - My voice used to stick there in my neck. I couldn't speak over the phone. We would greet and then click! It was disconnected. We were highly excited, and the voices were stuck in our throats. My husband used to say, "You are wasting time and money, you should talk if you have called".

03:37

### **MUSIC IN**

[00:40:47] Mohammad Khan [PK]-B: - **"FROM URDU"** - Technology was revolutionising the world then, especially in countries like the USA and the UK, which introduced new technologies. We used to hear about the technologies that would allow us to talk to the people in Pakistan while seeing each other's faces. We used to listen to these stories. Now, the time has come when we do it, and we see it as well. When we heard about these stories, we didn't believe them. But now, when mobile phones are being used, we can use them in many other fields.

[01:11:07] Khadijah Khurram-A: So, I have my in-laws in Pakistan, my husband's family's all there. So, we use WhatsApp – WhatsApp's probably the biggest one. I think before that it was like email, um, I think when we got married it was email. And then it was like, you know, you used to get these phone cards, you'd use them. And then obviously in the last, I think even the last ten years it's just, it's changed so quickly. So, we can WhatsApp, we can WhatsApp video call, we can voice notes, we can do all these crazy things... it's hugely changed the way we communicate with people.

[00:26:00] Suraiya Hussain [PK]-A: - **"FROM URDU"** - You get an instant reply now. You get the reply as soon as you send a message. That time was longer, you had to wait for two-three weeks. We used to look for the postman if he had any box containing the cassettes. We used to rush to him for the cassettes. Everything is easy now with the grace of God.

[00:55:55] Izaz Ur Rahman-A: Now so easy, now you know it's gone in a second. I mean, you hold that button and speak, and after, when you finish, you take your thumb off, move your thumb, and they get it! And they listen, and they send it as well. You know, which is very easy.

### **MUSIC IN**

05:51 MODERN TECHNOLOGY - PROS & CONS

TABASSUM:

I'm Tabassum Niamat, I'm one of the Community Engagement Officers for the Tape Letters Scotland project.

**And yes, although I grew up with long distance cassette tapes, I have to admit - WhatsApp is definitely my preferred form of communication these days!**

**I like it because it's instant, the fact that I can see my loved ones, my friends and family on video, I can hear their voices, and I am one of those people that is an avid voice note leaver. I know that annoys people to no end, but that is my preferred form of communication!**

**But it's also made me impatient... you know, waiting for the "two blue ticks" to appear on WhatsApp messages, it's like today's equivalent of the family in Pakistan waiting to hear the reaction to news they recorded on a cassette, and sent off to Scotland... they were having to wait weeks and weeks for a reply... you can hardly imagine that now!**

06:48

[00:27:48] Mirza Muhammad Saeed [PK]-A: - **"FROM PUNJABI"** - We can't deny the power of technology that we have now. You can get anything you want in a minute while waiting for it for two months. You had to wait, but the thing we got after that long had its importance and value. There was a charm in that wait because we got happier when we had to wait for something for so long. Now, we can get that happiness within a minute, but it also vanishes within the next minute. This is why both times have their importance. The importance of old times can't be neglected, but now you can get anything within a minute for which you had to wait so long.

[01:16:00] Khadijah Khurram-B: Obviously technology is great, but despite the technology, people are still not keeping in touch. That's what's really heartbreaking. Because everybody's got a smartphone now. And I'm like, I always say to my family in Pakistan, it must cost you to use WhatsApp in Pakistan, because nobody calls. I was like, it must, cause I was like, in the UK it's free. But it must, they must charge you in Pakistan, because you don't use it! [laughs] It is a free resource, but they don't use it. I mean, I'm sure they use it to communicate with each other, but they don't use it to communicate with us, which is sad. But then, it's their loss.

[00:49:55] Naila Waseem-A1: When we didn't have the phones, we would write long [00:50:00] letters, we would send tapes, we would do anything to communicate with them. Now the phones are practically free, and now we don't have time to phone anybody...

[00:48:50] Naila Waseem-A2: ...I've just recently been to Pakistan on, uh, on a break. And I've come back, and I did have the intention of keeping in touch with everybody, but life is so busy now, even with WhatsApp being free, you don't have time to phone. Yes, I, I'm a texter. I'll text somebody, but my, the reason I'll text is because I don't want to annoy anybody. I don't want to people to think, oh, she's annoying. She, she's called, I'm busy the now. I don't want people; I always think ahead and think, there's a five-hour gap or a four-hour gap. That fear keeps me from phoning them a lot. So I'll just send a text.

[00:13:30] Kausar Ilyas-B: I think what this digital media has done, it's actually taken the human factor out of us. We, our, our fingers itch for the mouse or for the, to slide the, you know, the tablet or the mobile phone. And, you know, your thumb itches to use the mouse for the computer and your fingers for your tablet and your phone. The human factor is out of our lives now. And that's a shame.

#### CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS\_TLPS-MI-1-2\_s1\_f01\_v1

[01:13:06] Khadijah Khurram-C1: I think you had to really think about what you were going to write or say in these tapes and letters. And I feel like people really thought about the word choices. Um, they tried to convey a lot more than what they were actually writing...

[01:20:40] Khadijah Khurram-C2: ...but I feel like now it's like, you know, you message with somebody and three months down the line you manage to get together. You know, everybody's just so busy with work and family life. Despite technology being so advanced, we're like, really quite lonely people and, um, you need to connect with other people to make your life better.

#### 10:22 LANGUAGE

#### MUSIC IN

#### TABASSUM:

**Technology moves on at an incredible pace. Who knows where we'll be in five years' time, never mind in fifty years' time!**

**But what about language?**

**The words we use to connect with each other - through Tape Letters, through written letters, through digital messages, video calls, voice notes - how has this evolved?**

**Just thinking about migration, communication, identity - everything we've explored in this series - how has all this affected language?**

[00:33:30] Kausar Ilyas-C: Our history and heritage, even our language is kind of fading away. I taught my boys how to speak Punjabi and Urdu, but you won't believe that. They don't understand me until I speak in their language.

[00:35:59] Mohammad Farooq-A: My kids, they spoke it, um, their kids unfortunately don't, it's all English, you know. Um, if you say something to them in, in Punjabi, they'll just look at you. It's sad. They're losing their heritage and their culture. They've lost that, which I think they should maintain. I mean, if you look at other Afro Caribbeans, uh, no matter how many generations go ahead, they still do not forget who they are you know. But Pakistanis, they, they feel that they have to mix and that's why they're losing their culture.

#### CASSETTE AUDIO

[00:24:21] Nazia Majid-A: **I think we've gone wrong with them, although we tried because we all speak English. And this way I regret**, um, and I think with my daughter, and my son both, and the little one, he just doesn't speak a word. Because we speak English in the house, they only know English. But with my daughter and my older son, because they spend a bit of time with my mum, they understand it, but they find it difficult to speak. My son tries, sometimes he laughs and he tries certain words. I mean, they'll [00:25:00] understand it. Older ones understand everything. But just speaking back now is a problem.

## 12:36 TABASSUM & WAJID chat - LANGUAGE

### MUSIC IN

TAB: Our Tape Letters project is founded and directed by Wajid Yaseen, who's here with me again... Wajid, can you just remind us about the different languages, and the combination of languages, that can be heard on the Tape Letters that we've unearthed for this project, and in the oral history interviews we've recorded so far?

WAJID: Yeah – so, Punjabi, Urdu, Pathwari, Pahari Pathwari – and of course English, right? – and then all sorts of combinations. And I think it's, um, in [01:04:20] linguistic terms, it's known as code switching. So people slide from language identities to another. ...

WAJID: Er – one thing I do sort of sense or feel is that oral only languages like Potwari, that there's a much quicker drop off rate in their usage. A single generation, it's gone.

TAB: Yeah. We just heard Nazia saying “I think we've gone wrong with them”, talking about the children, because they only speak English. Is this a widespread sense of regret, throughout the Tape Letters project?

WAJID: Yeah, I mean, of course, language in itself, it's so strongly fused to identity, isn't it? You know, like, you lose the language, you lose [01:09:40] tradition, you lose an entity, you lose ways of thinking about morality, right? And how to relay information. So...

WAJID: ...so it's understandable that people in the, as part of the project talk about it a lot because they're not able to relay the things they really care about to their kids, right? So they have to use the interface of another language.

TAB: I want to share a really interesting clip from one of the interviews, this is Nassir, who lives in Edinburgh, talking about his children:

[00:57:16] Nassir Elahi-A: **Wherever you grow up, you will have feelings for that. So, they did not grow up in Pakistan. You see, we grew up in Pakistan, was younger, was just, uh, the streets are not paved and all that. Some of the much muddy streets, but we played in that. We liked it, you know, so we had friends there. But because they don't have that connection, they're not going to feel any sympathy towards it at all. They grew up here. They know what's in here. They only feel for this place now... I think it will dissolve. I think, three more generations, there will be no Pakistanis left. How are you going to explain that to them, you know?**

TAB: Uh, there's, there's definitely a fear there and I've heard it amongst others as well. Definitely from the older generation...

TAB: ...the fear of, I think, we associate language so much with identity. The thought of losing language is probably, it sits right on top of there that if you lose the language, then you lose all your culture. If you do not understand us, then what are you going to know? Um, I would say those of us, um, from my own personal perspective, [01:13:40] I feel Scottish, um, sorry, the Pakistani identity is really strong. I don't think it's something that I have forgotten or something that I'll so readily give up on, but at the same time, you know, there's a lot in our Pakistani culture that I'm not agreeable with. And I think it's just, again, your environment and where you live, it is going to [01:14:00] shape you, and this fear of, that there won't be any Pakistanis left... may be a little unfounded? I can see where it can come from and why that fear is there. Well, personally, I mean, seeing the next generation and, you know, the kids that are growing up now, they're definitely different from us...

TAB: ...But there's a positive here. Ask the younger children how they feel. Ask them, what does it mean to be Pakistani [01:15:20] for them through their lens? Because it changes.

WAJID: Yeah, I mean, I think he's got a very strong point, and I think he's right. This generational shift, [01:15:40] it's very difficult to predict, you know, when you migrate, right? There's no way that my mom and dad could have predicted that their, their grandchildren wouldn't be able to speak to them. In that language. You know, I can't [01:16:00] speak to my mom in the same way that I can speak with, with most of my friends, right? Just simply because of that linguistic sort of barrier. So, I think he's right. I think the kind of the, [01:16:20] yeah, a few generations? Yeah. They'll completely would have forgot, what, they have no idea about what Pakistan is, like, you know, at all, right? I mean, it could even be that their, uh, their tolerance for spice is, you know, seriously challenged too. Shock horror! (laughs)

TAB: Are you [01:16:40] really a Pakistani if you can't handle spice? And we have voice notes within our group and videos to prove our point within our team. So just saying!

WAJID: Yeah. Hard evidence. We know.

TAB: A proper experiment that was conducted. We have proof!

WAJID: There we go!

## 17:06 TABASSUM on FUTURE OF SCOTLAND & PAKISTAN

### MUSIC IN

TABASSUM (outdoors):

**In the last episode, I spoke about my own identity... but where does the future lie?**

**What about my own children, my nieces and nephews, and their children? How will they identify?  
What languages will they speak?**

**What if Scotland does become an independent country - would that make a difference?  
And what about the future of Pakistan?**

Technology has played a huge part in connecting Scotland and Pakistan. And for a few decades, Tape Letters were absolutely essential to this.

But technology isn't everything. It's as much about how we feel. It's about who we want to be... and who we believe we are.

[00:40:32] Parveen Sajid-A: I always say Pakistani-Scottish, yeah. Somebody will say where're you from. I'm actually from Pakistan, but uh, I'm Scottish. ... People in Pakistan will say, oh, you're from the UK or you're from England. And I used to get annoyed. I'm not from England, I said, I'm not from London. 'Cause they assumed that, um, [00:41:00] UK is London or England. And I say, no, we're not from England, we're from Scotland. And that used to annoy us, the fact that that was a part of our kind of identity, but they're taking that away from us. 'Cause they think they're all English. But over the years then you realise that then they also realised, there was parts of the UK that were not English, they were not England, they were not London, they were Scotland.

#### **CASSETTE AUDIO**

TLPS-RA-1-1 Side B Rehana Ahmad

[00:36:26] Khalida Hussain-A: Scotland's my home now. Obviously, I've got my family here, my boys are brought up here, and my friends are here. I feel Scotland's the place where I feel a sense of belonging now. I feel at home. And it just makes me feel good that I have a nice city to live in. Scotland's beautiful and... you can just fall in love with it. And I think that's what's happened to me. I have fallen in love with Scotland!

19:19 OUTRO + CREDITS

#### **CASSETTE AUDIO**

TLPS-RA-1-1 Side B Rehana Ahmad

#### **MUSIC IN**

TABASSUM:

**TAPE LETTERS SCOTLAND** is a Modus Arts project, made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

This podcast series is produced, and sound designed, by Steve Urquhart – and narrated by me, Tabassum Niamat.

This episode features archive material from the Tape Letters Scotland oral history project.

*(Thank you to everyone who's shared their stories, their memories, and their cassettes.)*

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20:22 ENDS