

TAPE LETTERS – SCOTLAND EPISODE 3: PAUSE

00:00 INTRO CLIP

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS_TLPS-KK-25-T1_s2_f01_v1

[00:21:05] Izaz Ur Rahman-A: First one was so sad, you know, and after when I [am] getting regular, then slowly, slowly I'm getting happier.

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS_TLPS-KK-25-T1_s2_f01_v1

[00:20:51] Izaz Ur Rahman-A: I feel so happy. I feel so like my mum and dad are here. They're talking in front of me.

[00:21:21] Izaz Ur Rahman-A: My mum used to cry. My mum used to cry. My mum always, so soft hearted.

(CASSETTE PLAYING)

[00:10:22] Naila Waseem: **A1** My Mum, I can remember my mum crying loads of those occasions. She used to cry. There was sad tears and there was happy tears. **A2** [00:26:30] My Mum, I always found was emotional, and Dad, my Dad was a very emotional person, I've seen my dad cry.

MUSIC + BRIEF CASSETTE CLIPS

TAPE LETTERS - SCOTLAND. EPISODE 3: PAUSE

01:30 NAILA - MY BROTHER'S BIRTH AND ILLNESS

[00:07:10] Naila Waseem: **A3** You called them tape letters, it was like small cassettes. And I can remember as a child that when they would get them, or when, I still remember one tape I remember very, very well, which I'll not forget.

[00:12:05] **A4** That was when my brother was born, in 1970. ... I remember that, uh, my dad had, the tape he sent, telling everybody that he had a son, what a proud father he was and all that. My mum wasn't too great. She was in hospital. My brother wasn't too great. He had, uh, something wrong with him. He was only a few weeks old and had to be hospitalised. Uh, so my dad had explained all that in the tape. I was five or six years old. [00:13:25] I can just remember my dad saying, being happy announcing his child and then being sad and saying he's very ill, make dua for him. Um, because he was under three months old when he was hospitalized for months. ...

I could just still picture my dad [00:14:00] telling somebody on that cassette that I have a son, uh, after three daughters and, uh, my dad's brother had suggested a name and my dad had said, he's going to

name him and I'm going to have that name. And we were just so over, over the moon that we had a little baby in the house.

A5 Unfortunately, that brother has passed away now.

02:53 EMOTIONS - DESPAIR, PAIN, SADNESS, LOSS, GRIEF

TABASSUM:

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

Earlier in this series, we heard about the novelty, the excitement, the anticipation, of families exchanging these little cassette tapes, sending them across the world to each other. But of course, once the novelty and the anticipation dies down... many other emotions come into play.

[00:16:20] Mohammad Farooq-A: It was anticipation of what it said. You know, that's my loved one. It's my grandfather. It's my, my mother. Um, I want to hear from them, you know. Uh, so you always got a bit of, uh, Emotional. That's the word. Emotional about it.

[00:23:35] Dean Mohammed-A: Initially just excited, and it was...glad to hear the voices, but, uh, when as a... keeps listening, gets very emotional and then it gets a bit depressed, you know, maybe a bit depressed. It's not always like a happy feeling, you know, like, you like to hear them, but at the same time as you're getting a bit, uh, loneliness or depressed, you know.

[00:20:26] Jamila Bibi [PK]: - **"FROM URDU & PUNJABI"** - **A1 (first bit)** My parents wept in the tape. I became very sad after listening to their sad voices.

[00:17:21] Jamila Bibi [PK]: **A2** My Dad was crying; I called at someone's house after listening to the tape. I asked them to call my parents from their home. They called them; I asked my Dad, "Why did you cry while recording the tape?" He stated, "We can't tolerate your distances".

[00:20:26] Jamila Bibi [PK]: **A1 (last bit)** I used to ask them about their worries, or if they need money, or anything else. They just said that they don't need anything, no money, all they needed was me.

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS_TLPS-KK-25-T1_s2_f01_v1

[00:16:46] Mohammad Farooq-B: If we felt, if it was a family one, we'd all sit down and, they'd listen to the tape and they'd have a laugh of what was being said. Uh, they'd cry if it was, uh, somebody was ill or passed away. You know, uh, that was the, the worst things of listening, when your family member passed away. You weren't there to comfort them, and they weren't here to comfort you. You were limited.

[00:13:31] Mirza Muhammad Saeed-A: - **"FROM PUNJABI"** - We felt it by the other person's voice on the cassette if they were happy or sad. Sometimes, we got the cassette in which the other person consoled us regarding any death. We could guess their pain and sorrow by their voice. I felt that they missed the dead person, the family, and everyone. And if someone recorded the cassette on a happy occasion, we

could guess their happiness by their voice. ... [00:14:24] If we were talking about a happy occasion, like a family childbirth or a wedding, everyone was happy and looked at each other happily. Everyone wanted to congratulate each other first. Similarly, the feeling was different while recording if there was a grieved occasion. The person who recorded them used to be sad, which made others unhappy, so they wept.

06:48

MUSIC IN

[00:08:39] Nadira Saddiq [PK]: - **"FROM URDU"** - **A1-first bit** There was a message that my youngest paternal uncle had died. ... When the cassette came, my grandmother recorded a message for me that my uncle was gone...

[37:15] **A2-first bit** ...My grandmother was distraught, and she recorded while crying, she said, "My daughter, you will not find your uncle now when you come back to Pakistan".

[00:08:39] **A1-last bit** It hit my heart that my uncle was gone, and I was not there with my loved ones. I was missing so much being there for them.

[00:36:16] Nadira Saddiq [PK]: **A3** He was very young. He had four or five children; everyone became silent after that incident. ... **A2-last bit** We didn't send any cassettes after that incident. Because everyone felt terrible after that... everyone was distraught.

[00:06:23] Shenaz Ahmed-A: - **"FROM URDU"** - I got one tape from my Dad, [when] he was sick... My Dad recorded a cassette and sent it with my elder sister for me. It wasn't very long; it was just a short one. ... My Dad said many good things to me in that tape. He said, "My daughter, I am good. Take care of yourself. Take care of your mother-in-law". He advised me like the elders do. He said, "I think both of us can't meet each other. You are my lovely daughter"... I was very dear to my Dad. He told me not to worry and that we shall meet. He said a few things and the cassette was finished. We got his death news after one week. It was a big shock for me. I had three children, and that time was very hard for me. My sister was there for me; she took care of me.

[00:15:32] Fariha Khan-A: You go back and you listen to things... and it's just voices as well. People that have passed now, you can hear their voices, you can go back and hear the conversation that her brother and her mum were having, and it just brings back memories.

[00:28:12] Kausar Ilyas-A: But sometimes, you know, keeping memories is not a good idea because it just takes you back again. You have to forgive and forget. And just get on with your life. That's... that's life.

09:45 LINK / SHIFT OF FOCUS

CASSETTE AUDIO (man singing, children laughing)

NLS_TLPS-KK-25-T1_s1_f01_v1

TABASSUM:

What is it about the cassette tape format, that stirs such deep, sometimes unbearable emotions?

CASSETTE AUDIO

NLS_TLPS-MI-1-2_s1_f01_v1

Unlike a letter, or a telegram - or even a video on a screen - a cassette recording can feel like the person is right there in the room with you, or sitting right beside you.

You hear their pauses, captured in real time.

CASSETTE AUDIO (sniffs, sighs)

NLS_TLPS-KR-1-1_s1_f01_v1

You hear the cracks in their voice when they get upset.

You can hear their smile.

You can feel their pain.

And there's something particularly powerful about the distance the cassette has travelled.

<PAKISTANI VILLAGE AUDIO / TANGA>

Hearing those familiar sounds, from thousands of miles away in Pakistan - the sounds of traffic, the countryside, the farm animals, sometimes the tanga - it's such a vivid reminder of how different life is here.

<CHANGE OF ATMOS>

TABASSUM (outside Pollokshields Primary School):

I grew up here in Scotland. This is where I went to school, Pollokshields Primary.

We grew up in a predominantly South Asian community. So that meant our school also reflected the people and the children that were living here. I think in my class there were maybe three white children, and this was the case for most of the classes. So for us, our Scottish identity, Pakistani identity, was very much around who we were, how we looked like. Never really thought about skin colour, or what that meant. And it's only really when I went to secondary school that I realised, actually, Scottish people come in all shapes, colours and sizes! And my accent was different too – something I didn't realise before, because maybe we had a hint of Pakistani in the way we spoke our English. But then, accents change as well. Languages change, and we all just blend.

12:08 IDENTITY

[01:21:17] Naseem Hussain-A: I used to always say, "I am Scottish. I am a Scottish Muslim". Originally from Pakistan. Actually, on the whole, I don't think of my colour, but I can't hide either; it is obvious. Otherwise, I would have said that I am Scottish Muslim. But because of my colour, I have to say I am

original... because people say, "Where are you originally from?" Well, I am originally from Pakistan. So, I just call myself a "Scottish Muslim".

[00:42:15] Kausar Ilyas-B: "I think, as a Pakistani, I live two separate lives. I'm torn between two cultures, two languages, two countries. And half of the times, people who used to come to my shop say, Billy, I used to call myself Billy, because if they want to, you know, I tell them my name is Kausar, but if it's easier for you to call me Billy, that's your choice. You're torn between two cultures. In fact, it's like when you are amongst Scottish people, you put a mask on. Scottish mask. And when you are amongst Asians... it's not easy. And it's not nice. I shouldn't have to be like that. I think the country you come from and the country you belong to, that is your country. But my father is buried here, my brother is buried here, my mother is buried here. You see, I take a pride in being Scottish."

[00:45:08] Kausar Ilyas: "I'm Scottish Pakistani. I love my culture. I love my Glasgow."

MUSIC IN

13:58

[00:22:14] Akeel Ahmad-A: I see myself as Scottish, Scottish Muslim. Yes, I know my ancestry does go back there. But, you know, I also think of myself as a Muslim first and Scottish because I was born in Scotland. I am a Muslim. The whole world belongs to Allah, you know, so the Muslim is worldwide. And, I mean, there's small elements of Pakistani culture in me, but I don't see myself as being a part of Pakistan.

[00:33:14] Mohammad Farooq-C: I have my own tartan. It's registered. Um, so I'm more Scottish than anything else. I'm pro-independence. I don't believe what some, the, the non... non-constitutional people say that Scotland won't be able to provide for itself if it's independent. It's got vast talent, it's got vast oil, uh, farmland, you know. Yeah, it's definitely Scottish.

14:57 TABASSUM + WAJID on IDENTITY

TABASSUM:

TAB: Throughout this series, we're hearing a whole range of people sharing their experiences of tape letters, of migration... and of identity.

MUSIC IN

Wajid Yaseen, director of the Tape Letters project, is here with me again...

Wajid, just thinking about identity - is there anything in particular that's stopped you in your tracks, is there anything that's surprised you, either from the cassettes, or in the interviews we've recorded?

WAJID: Yeah – so, I've been sort of brought up with [00:37:40] this idea that I'm a British Pakistani, right...

WAJID: ...right? And, I identify with that, all the things that rubbed me up the wrong way and all the things I agree with, for sure. But, since working on the project, definitely the Scottish identity [00:39:00] and how strong it is in the Scottish Pakistani community...

WAJID: ...that's something that's become kind of a bit more like a bit of a revelation for me as we're working on the project...

WAJID: ...it's definitely made me go, okay, well, in the group, as [00:40:20] we're operating, the whole team that includes all of our community engagement officers, and all of our volunteers, right? And, and all of all the people that we've interviewed and the people that I've spoke to personally, they're Scots. And my Englishness has just suddenly become a bit more crystalline, you know? And so yeah, [00:40:40] I'm okay with that.

[00:40:40] Wajid: If it means I'm, I'm an English-Pakistani, but that's the, that's the way to reframe it. I actually, it feels a bit more accurate.

TAB (RESPONDS TO WAJID): Yeah. So, so you, obv – you do not come across as a traditional Pakistani in the sense of what I am accustomed to...

TAB: ...But even within our, our sense of being a Pakistani, being [00:43:40] English or Scottish, there's themes of commonality running there. But we should be allowed to be different as well! Like, this is the thing that just makes life a bit more interesting and all of us actually not feeling so confined, and that we have to be a specific way in order to be accepted by others. So for me, it's [00:44:00] just your, you being a different version of Pakistani to what I'm accustomed to, is great.

TABASSUM (outside Pollokshields Primary School):

What is home? I'm standing here on a street very familiar to me, where I grew up, and I think, what does it mean to be Scottish, and to be Pakistani? I belong to very distinct cultures, two very different worlds. I feel like I belong to each one, and I belong to none. I go to Pakistan, and it feels as home to me as Scotland does. But then I start missing Scotland, and I want to be back home. So, Scotland is home, but then I'll miss Pakistan as well. It's a strange feeling, that we can belong to two very different places, cultures, countries, but still feel like we're not fully whole. And I think I'm not the only one that feels that way. That's the way for most of us that have come and left the motherland, or the homeland.

(TRAFFIC – FADES)

17:45

[00:39:10] Khalida Hussain-A: I had my childhood in Pakistan, so I still have those vivid memories of how I was brought up in that time. ... whereas, my kids, they've not seen that, or they don't know what Pakistan's like ... They've been brought up here, they've got Western influences and that's all they know. So, I do try to make sure that they have, bit of that understanding through sharing my experiences with them and growing them up in having some appreciation of their heritage and their culture and their traditions. And I recently took them back to Pakistan, because I wanted them to know about their heritage ... you know, [00:41:00] no matter how much they might think they're Western, visually, they're still Pakistanis. They're still brown. They are still going to be seen as Pakistanis. And they have to understand what their roots and heritage are. And my reason for taking them back was to help them appreciate where they come from or where their family comes from, and have appreciation of their roots. And I feel so blessed to have had the privilege to be able to do that and take my boys back. And now I feel... so glad that I've been able to achieve just hearing them say they want to go back. Because I still have connections with the country despite coming here and being brought up here, working here and loving Scotland. I still feel Pakistan is my root.

CASSETTE AUDIO (children – “Pakistan” chant)

TLPS-RA-1-1 Side A Rehana Ahmad

19:28 OUTRO + CREDITS

TABASSUM:

Connection between Scotland and Pakistan is, of course, what this series - and what this whole project - is all about.

Next time: we'll hear more about two aspects that have developed hugely, since the days of Tape Letters - and which are still changing now: technology, and language.

MUSIC IN

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.

For more information, head to tapeletters.com --- or follow us on social media, [@tapelettersscotland](https://twitter.com/tapelettersscotland)

20:40 ENDS