Identity requires more than just citizenship

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In the globalized world in which we live, the history of well-established nations like the United States is often told from the perspective of the people who were born there, who have lived through those events, and who continue to influence our daily lives. But what about the individuals who migrated to these nations and how their experiences contribute to our understanding of those nations?

In this article, we explore the role of immigrants in shaping the identity of nations, using the example of Punjabi heritage in the United Kingdom. We discuss how Punjabi migrants have incorporated their own heritage into the historical and cultural narratives of the countries they have settled in, and how this has contributed to a more inclusive and diverse understanding of national identity.

Dr. Rajbir Hazelwood (center) and family.

One of the key themes highlighted in this article is the idea that cultural identity requires more than just citizenship. In late 20th century Britain, Punjabi identity was often seen as a religious festival, but there is much more to it. The Punjabi language is a unifying force that connects the Punjabi diaspora across the world, and it has played a significant role in maintaining cultural and social ties among Punjabis.

Identity is not just about being born in a particular country, but it is also about how individuals and communities choose to define and express their belonging. For many Punjabis, the idea of being British is not just about being a citizen, but it is also about being Punjabi in language, culture, and heritage.

The Punjabi language has allowed Punjabis to maintain their cultural identity in the face of assimilation, and it has helped to create a sense of community among Punjabis in the United Kingdom. The language has also served as a tool for political and cultural expression, and it has been used to challenge the dominant narratives of the British state.

In conclusion, identity requires more than just citizenship. It is about the ways in which individuals and communities choose to define and express their belonging, and this can take many forms. For many Punjabis, the idea of being British is not just about being a citizen, but it is also about being Punjabi in language, culture, and heritage.